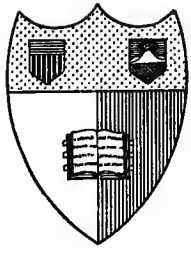
SHORT PLAYS FROM DICKENS

H. B. BROWNE



SHORT PLAYS FROM DICKENS

"It's a Poor Heart That Never Rejoices."

SHORT PLAYS FROM DICKENS

FOR THE USE OF AMATEUR AND SCHOOL DRAMATIC SOCIETIES

ARRANGED BY

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OF THE
DICKENS FELLOWSHIP

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY 'PHIZ,' GEORGE CRUIKSHANK, GEORGE CATTERMOLE, AND MARCUS STONE, R.A.

THIRD EDITION

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PREFACE

TO THE FIRST EDITION

THE twenty *Short Plays* included in this little volume have been prepared to meet a growing demand for short actable plays adapted from the works of Charles Dickens. They are taken from some of the principal episodes in seven of his Books, and they will be found to contain, among the eighty-eight Characters introduced, some of the best known of Dickens' creations.

The order in which the Plays are arranged is, in the first place, that of the publication of the Books from which they are taken, and, in the second place, that of the occurrence in each Book of the episodes of which use has been made.

The aim that I have endeavoured to follow out in their construction has been to make as few alterations as possible in the text of Dickens, and to choose such episodes as bring out strongly the characteristics of the persons represented. At the same time I have sought to make the whole clear and serviceable by adopting the method of giving, in connection with each Play—

(1) *A short description of each Character*—again, as far as possible, in Dickens' own words;

(2) *Reproductions of the original Illustrations* by "Phiz," Cruikshank, Cattermole, and Marcus Stone; *or*, failing these, *references to such Illustrations* in the **Biographical Edition of the Works of Charles Dickens** as will be of use to the Players;

(3) *An indication of the Arrangement of the Stage* necessary for its production, *and of the Time taken by* its performance.

To these I have added *a few hints on general Stage-management, Costumes, Make-up, etc.*—for which reference should be made to the Introduction.

The number of Characters introduced in each Play varies from two to ten, sufficient scope being thereby allowed for many different tastes and circumstances. The Plays can all be acted on a small stage, and it will be found possible to adapt for their production the end of any good-sized room. Some have been produced, with success, on a stage measuring no more than fifteen feet by six feet. Scenery, as such, is nowhere required, and the Properties necessary are limited to the minimum in number.

It is an obvious fact that there is more likelihood of success attending the efforts of a band of Amateurs, and that greater interest is created, when an evening's performance is divided among several players than when it depends entirely on the efforts of a few. For this reason it is hoped that these "Short Plays from Dickens" may be found useful to the members of *School Dramatic Societies*, as well as to the members of *Amateur Dramatic Societies*, and, in particular, of those *Societies* formed in connection with the various **Branches of the Dickens Fellowship**, at home and in our British Colonies.

I wish to express my grateful thanks to Mr. B. W. Matz, Editor of the *Dickensian*, for his kindly interest and some valuable suggestions; and to Mr. G. E. Tindal, Hon. Secretary of the Hull Branch of the Dickens Fellowship, for his kindness in revising the proof-sheets.

HORACE B. BROWNE.

Hull,
October 1908.

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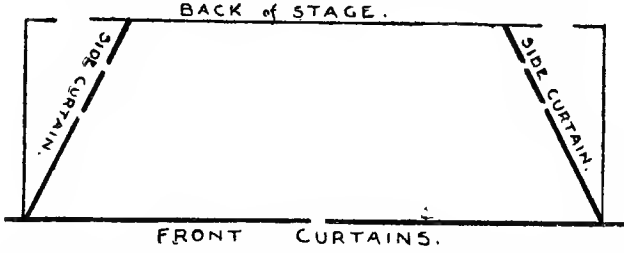
THE STAGE :—

For sixteen of these Plays, *i. e.* for all except *The Gentleman Next Door*, *Hatching a Conspiracy*, *The Stranger's Visit*, and *An Unexpected Meeting*, nothing more is absolutely necessary than a simple arrangement of curtains such as is shown in the following plan.



The curtains across the front of the stage can be fixed either to draw along a rod, or to pull up from the bottom central corners, so that, when fastened open, they hang in corner folds. It is an advantage to have the side curtains fixed obliquely; and, if these are fastened together at the top, weighted at the bottom, and allowed to hang separately, the necessity for entrance and exit doors can be avoided.

For the four Plays mentioned above, something more is necessary. Any jobbing carpenter can build up the frame-work of the partition required in *Hatching a Conspiracy*, *The Stranger's Visit*, and *An Unexpected Meeting*, or that of the garden wall required in *The Gentleman Next Door*. The closets and the summer-house mentioned

in the two Plays last named can be more lightly built, and no professional help in their construction will be needed.

Sheets of paper made to represent doors, windows—to move up and down—and fireplaces can be obtained for a few shillings from Messrs. Samuel French, 26 Southampton Street, Strand; and they can be very easily affixed to the frame-work. The same firm also supplies sheets of paper made to represent the brick-work that is necessary for covering the skeleton of the garden wall in *The Gentleman Next Door*, and that can similarly be used, if thought desirable, for the exterior of the partition in the other three Plays.

STAGE-MANAGEMENT :—

The stage directions given in the Plays are almost entirely Dickens' own words remodelled. As a born actor, he incorporated in his pages—consciously or unconsciously—sufficient indications of action to make the production of any particular episode on the stage an easy matter. But there is, of course, no reason why these should not be added to as is thought advisable by the players themselves.

Many slight alterations in the action of the Plays will, doubtless, suggest themselves, and such alterations may conduce to simplification of the staging of certain Plays. For instance, with the exercise of a little ingenuity, the closets mentioned in *An Unexpected Meeting* can be dispensed with, and so can the summer-house mentioned in *The Gentleman Next Door*, if strict adherence to the text of Dickens is not desired. Again, the need for a window whose parts are movable will be done away with, if Barnaby is allowed to enter his mother's cottage by bursting open the door from the outside, and if Miggs is similarly allowed to rid the lock of some of its coal-dust and admit Simon Tappertit by the door instead of by the window.

The time stated for the performance of each Play does not include that taken up in getting the Stage ready. In the case, therefore, of Plays which consist of more than one Scene, extra time must be allowed for the necessary intervals.

COSTUMES :—

Except in the case of the Plays taken from *Barnaby Rudge*, the action of the Plays here given is supposed to take place in Dickens' own time; so that the costumes to

MRS. TIBBS' BOARDING-HOUSE

(FROM *Sketches by Boz*)

CHARACTERS.

MRS. TIBBS	*A boarding-house keeper.*
MR. TIBBS	*Her husband.*
MRS. MAPLESONE	*Boarders at Mrs. Tibbs'.*
MISS MATILDA MAPLESONE	
MISS JULIA MAPLESONE	
MR. CALTON	
MR. SEPTIMUS HICKS	
MR. SIMPSON	
JAMES	*A boy-servant.*
ROBINSON	*A maid-servant.*

SCENE I.—*The parlour at Mrs. Tibbs' boarding-house.*

II.—*The dining-room at the same.*

III.—*The parlour six months later.*

[*Time.*—16 *minutes.*]

Description of Characters.

MRS. TIBBS: A woman somewhat short of stature, and always talking; the most tidy, fidgety, thrifty little personage that ever inhaled the smoke of London.

MR. TIBBS: A man by no means large, and with very short legs, but, by way of indemnification, with a peculiarly long face. He rarely speaks, but has one long story that he is very fond of telling—but, as he speaks very slowly and softly and his better-half very quickly and loudly, he never succeeds in getting beyond the introductory sentence. For his dress see illustration on page 10.

MRS. MAPLESONE: An enterprising widow of about fifty; shrewd, scheming and good-looking. She is amiably anxious on behalf of her daughters, and would have no objection to marry again, if it would benefit her dear girls.

MISS MATILDA MAPLESONE and MISS JULIA MAPLESONE: Young ladies of twenty-five and twenty-two respectively, who have been at different watering-places for four seasons, and have done all that industrious girls can do—and all to no purpose.

MR. CALTON: A superannuated beau, who is used to saying of himself that although his features are not regularly handsome, they are striking. He is exceedingly vain, and inordinately selfish. He has never been married, but is on the look-out for a wife with money. He has acquired the reputation of being the very pink of politeness. For his dress in Scene III. see illustration on page 10.

MR. SEPTIMUS HICKS: A tallish, white-faced young man, with spectacles, and a black ribbon round his neck instead of a neckerchief—a most interesting person; a poetical walker of the hospitals, and a "very talented young man." He is fond of "lugging" into conversation all sorts of quotations from *Don Juan*, without fettering himself by the propriety of their application. For his dress in Scene III. see illustration on page 10.

MR. SIMPSON: An empty-headed young man, with hair like a wig, and whiskers meeting beneath his chin and seeming to be strings to tie it on. He wears a maroon-coloured dress-coat, with collar and cuffs of the same tint.

JAMES: A boy who acts as man-servant, and wears a revived black coat of his master's.

ROBINSON: Undescribed by Dickens.

SCENE I.

Arrangement of Stage.

A fireplace—with steel fender—on one side, a door at the back of the stage, and another opposite the fireplace. Chairs, a sofa, and a small table scattered about. When the curtain rises, Mr. Tibbs is standing rub-

bing his hands gently before the fire, and Mrs. Tibbs is bustling about with a duster in her hand.

Mrs. T. Charming woman, that Mrs Maplesone! Charming woman, indeed! And the two daughters are delightful. We must have some fish to-day; they'll join us at dinner for the first time. [MR. T. *places the poker at right angles with the fire shovel, and essays to speak, but recollects he has nothing to say.*] And the young ladies have kindly volunteered to bring their own piano.

[MR. T. *goes to a chair at the back of the stage, sits down, and tips himself backward so that his head rests against the wall.*]

Mr. T. [*Struck with a bright thought*] It's very likely——

Mrs. T. Pray don't lean your head against the paper. [*He takes the chair to the fireplace and sits down again, with his feet on the fender.*] And don't put your feet on the steel fender; that's worse.

Mr. T. [*Taking his feet from the fender*] It's very likely one of the young ladies may set her cap at young Mr. Simpson, and you know a marriage——

Mrs. T. [*Shrieking*] A what! [TIBBS *modestly repeats his former suggestion.*] I beg you won't mention such a thing. A marriage, indeed!—to rob me of my boarders —no, not for the world. But hadn't you better go and dress for dinner?

Mr. T. Yes, my dear.

[*Goes out by door at back of stage.* MRS. T. *bustles about for a few minutes and then follows.* MR. HICKS *and* MR. SIMPSON *enter by the other door.*]

Mr. S. Are these gals 'andsome?

[*They loll on chairs and contemplate their pumps.*

Mr. H. Don't know.

Mr. S. I saw a devilish number of parcels in the passage when I came home.

Mr. H. Materials for the toilet, no doubt.

——"Much linen, lace, and several pair
Of stockings, slippers, brushes, combs, complete;
With other articles of ladies fair,
To keep them beautiful, or leave them neat."

Mr. S. Is that from Milton?

Mr. H. [*With a look of contempt*] No—from Byron. Hush! Here come the gals.

[*Enter* MRS. T., *followed by* MRS. MAPLESONE *and her two daughters.*]

Mrs. T. Mrs. Maplesone and the Miss Maplesones—Mr. Hicks. Mr. Hicks—Mrs. Maplesone and the Miss Maplesones. [*Turns round to* MR. S.] Mr. Simpson, I beg your pardon—Mr. Simpson—Mrs. Maplesone and the Miss Maplesones.

[*The gentlemen immediately begin to slide about with much politeness, and the ladies smile, curtsey, and glide into chairs, and dive for dropped pocket-handkerchiefs. The gentlemen lean against the wall;* MRS. TIBBS *goes through a bit of serious pantomime with* ROBINSON, *who has partly opened the door and is making signs to her mistress very noticeably. The two young ladies look at each other; and everybody else appears to discover something very attractive in the pattern of the fender.*]

Mrs. M. Julia, my love. Julia.

J. M. Yes, ma.

Mrs. M. Don't stoop.

[*This is said for the purpose of directing general attention to* MISS JULIA'S *figure, which is undeniable. Everybody looks at her, accordingly, and there is another pause.*]

Mrs. M. [*To* MRS. TIBBS, *in a confidential tone*] We had the most uncivil hackney-coachman to-day, you can imagine.

Mrs. T. [*With an air of great commiseration*] Dear me!

[*The* SERVANT *again appears at the door, and commences telegraphing most earnestly to* MRS. T.]

Mr. H. [*In his most insinuating tone*] I think hackney-coachmen generally *are* uncivil.

Mrs. M. [*As if the idea had never struck her before*] Positively I think they are.

Mr. S. And cabmen, too.

[*This remark is a failure, for no one intimates, by word or sign, the slightest knowledge of the manners and customs of cabmen.*

Mrs. T. [*To the* SERVANT, *who, by way of making her presence known to her mistress, has been giving sundry hems and sniffs outside the door*] Robinson, what *do* you want?

R. Please, ma'am, master wants his clean things.

[*The two young men turn their faces to each other, and "go off" like a couple of bottles of ginger-beer; the ladies put their handkerchiefs to their mouths; and little* MRS. TIBBS *bustles out of the room.*]

M. M. [*Whispering to her sister* JULIA] What a magnificent dresser Mr. Simpson is!

J. M. Splendid!

M. M. What whiskers!

J. M. Charming!

[MRS. T. *returns, looking very flurried, and followed by* MR. CALTON, *whom she proceeds to introduce to each of the ladies in turn.*]

James. [*Appearing in the doorway*] Dinner's on the table, ma'am, if you please.

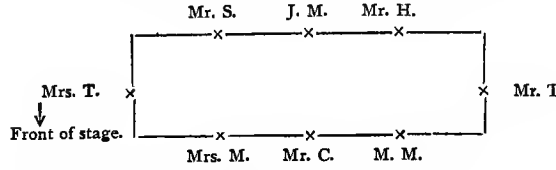
Mrs. T. Oh! Mr. Calton, will you lead Mrs. Maplesone? —Thank you.

[MR. SIMPSON *offers his arm to* MISS JULIA; MR. SEPTIMUS HICKS *escorts* MATILDA; *and the procession proceeds to the dining-room.*] [*Curtain falls.*

SCENE II.

Arrangement of Stage.

A table to seat eight is laid for dinner. When the curtain rises, the diners are seated as shown below.



Mr. T. is serving soup. Mrs. T. is serving fish. James hands round the plates.

Mrs. T. Soup for Mrs Maplesone, my dear. [TIBBS *helps the soup in a hurry, makes a small island on the tablecloth, and puts his glass upon it to hide it from his wife.*] Miss Julia, shall I assist you to some fish?

J. M. If you please—very little—oh! plenty, thank you.

[*A bit about the size of a walnut put upon the plate.*

Mrs. M. [*To* MR. CALTON] Julia is a *very* little eater.

Mr. C. [*Busy eating the fish with his eyes*] Ah!

[*The other boarders are served in turn, all taking fish, so that there is only a small piece left.*]

Mrs. T. [*To* MR. TIBBS, *after every one else has been helped*] My dear, what do *you* take?

[*This inquiry is accompanied by a look intimating that he mustn't say fish, because there is not much left.*

Mr. T. [*Coolly*] Why—I'll take a little—fish, I think.

Mrs. T. Did you say fish, my dear? [*Another frown.*

Mr. T. [*With an expression of acute hunger depicted in his countenance*] Yes, dear.

Mrs. T. [*Sternly, and very distinctly*] James, take this to your master, and take away your master's knife.

[TIBBS *is, therefore, constrained to chase small particles of salmon round and round his plate with a piece of bread and a fork.*]

Mrs. T. [*As* TIBBS *swallows the fourth mouthful*] Take away, James. [JAMES *clears away the plates.*

Mr. T. [*More hungry than ever*] I'll take a bit of bread, James.

Mrs. T. Never mind your master now, James, see about the meat.

[*A pause ensues before the table is replenished, in which* MR. SIMPSON, MR. CALTON, and MR. HICKS *produce three bottles of wine, and take wine with everybody—except* TIBBS.]

Mr. H. [*Unable to resist a singularly appropriate quotation*]—

> "But beef is rare within these oxless isles;
> Goats' flesh there is, no doubt, and kid, and mutton,
> And when a holiday upon them smiles,
> A joint upon their barbarous spits they put on."

Mrs. T. [*Aside to* MRS. M.] How very ungentlemanly behaviour to talk in that way.

Mr. C. [*Filling his glass*] Ah, Tom Moore is my poet.

Mrs. M. And mine.

J. M. And mine.

Mr. S. And mine.

Mr. C. Look at his compositions.

Mr. S. [*With confidence*] To be sure.

Mr. H. Look at Don Juan.

M. M. Julia's letter.

J. M. Can anything be grander than the Fire Worshippers?

Mr. S. To be sure.

Mr. C. Or Paradise and the Peri.

Mr. S. [*Who thinks he is getting through it capitally*] Yes; or Paradise and the Peer.

Mr. H. It's all very well. Where will you find anything finer than the description of the siege, at the commencement of the seventh canto?

[*A dish containing two fowls is brought in and placed before* MR. T.]

Mr. T. [*With mouth full of bread*] Talking of a siege, when I was in the volunteer corps, in eighteen hundred and six, our commanding officer was Sir Charles Rampart; and one day, when we were exercising on the ground on which the London University now stands, he says, says he, Tibbs (calling me from the ranks), Tibbs——

Mrs. T. [*Interrupting and speaking in an awfully distinct tone*] James, tell your master if he *won't* carve those fowls, to send them to me. [*Curtain falls.*

SCENE III.

Arrangement of Stage.

Furniture arranged as in Scene I. A bell-rope should hang by the side of the fireplace. When the curtain rises, Mr. Calton is sitting in an easy-chair. A knock is heard at the door, and James enters.

Mr. C. Well, James, did you give Mr. Hicks my message?

James. Yes, sir, and he asked whether you were unwell, sir, and I said you looked rather rum, as it might be. And he said, sir, that that was no proof of your being ill, and that he would be down directly, sir.

Mr. C. Alright, James, you may go.

[JAMES *bows and does so.* MR. C. *takes a pinch of snuff, and shortly* MR. HICKS *comes in. Mutual shakes of the hand are exchanged, and* MR. SEPTIMUS HICKS *is motioned to a seat. A short pause ensues.* MR. HICKS *coughs, and* MR. CALTON *takes another pinch of snuff.* MR. SEPTIMUS HICKS *breaks silence.*]

Mr. H. [*Very tremulously*] I rceceived a note.

Mr. C. Yes, you did.

Mr. H. Exactly.

Mr. C. Yes.

[*Both gentlemen look at the table with a determined aspect.*]

Mr. C. [*Very pompously*] Hicks, I have sent for you, in consequence of certain arrangements which are pending in this house, connected with a marriage.

Mr. H. [*Gasping*] With a marriage!

Mr. C. With a marriage. I have sent for you to prove the great confidence I can repose in you.

Mr. H. [*Eagerly*] And will you betray me?

Mr. C. I betray *you!* Won't *you* betray *me?*

Mr. H. [*Much agitated*] Never; no one shall know, to my dying day, that you had a hand in the business.

Mr. C. [*With an air of great self-complacency*] People must know that, some time or other—within a year, I imagine. We *may* have a family, you know.

Mr. H. We!—That won't affect you, surely?

Mr. C. The devil it won't!

Mr. H. [*Bewildered*] No! how can it?

Mr. C. [*Throwing himself back in his chair*] Oh, Matilda! [*Sighs in a lack-a-daisical voice, and applies his right hand a little to the left of the fourth button of his waistcoat, counting from the bottom.*] Oh, Matilda!

Mr. H. [*Starting up*] What Matilda?

Mr. C. [*Doing the same*] Matilda Maplesone.

Mr. H. I marry her to-morrow morning.

Mr. C. It's false. I marry her!

Mr. H. You marry her?

Mr. C. I marry her!

Mr. H. You marry Matilda Maplesone?

Mr. C. Matilda Maplesone.

Mr. H. Miss Maplesone marry *you?*

Mr. C. Miss Maplesone! No; Mrs. Maplesone.

Mr. H. [*Falling into his chair*] Good Heavens! You marry the mother, and I the daughter!

Mr. C. Most extraordinary circumstance! And rather inconvenient too; for the fact is, that owing to Matilda's wishing to keep her intention secret from her daughters until the ceremony has taken place, she doesn't like applying to any of her friends to give her away. I entertain an objection to making the affair known to my acquaintance

just now; and the consequence is, that I sent to you to know whether you'd oblige me by acting as father.

Mr. H. [*In a tone of condolence*] I should have been most happy, I assure you; but, you see, I shall be acting as bridegroom. One character is frequently a consequence of the other; but it is not usual to act in both at the same time. There's Simpson—I have no doubt he'll do it for you.

Mr. C. I don't like to ask him, he's such a donkey.

[MR. SEPTIMUS HICKS *looks up at the ceiling, and down at the floor; at last an idea strikes him.*]

Mr. H. Let the man of the house, Tibbs, be the father.

[*Quotes, as peculiarly applicable to* TIBBS *and the pair*]—

"Oh Powers of Heaven! what dark eyes meets she there?
'Tis—'tis her father's—fixed upon the pair."

Mr. C. The idea has struck me already; but, you see, Matilda, for what reason I know not, is very anxious that Mrs. Tibbs should know nothing about it, till it's all over. It's a natural delicacy, after all, you know.

Mr. H. He's the best-natured little man in existence, if you manage him properly. Tell him not to mention it to his wife, and assure him she won't mind it, and he'll do it directly. My marriage is to be a secret one, on account of the mother and *my* father; therefore he must be enjoined to secrecy. [MR. C. *rings the bell and* JAMES *appears.*

Mr. C. James, ask Mr. Tibbs if he will have the kindness to step upstairs for a moment.

James. Very good, sir.

[*In a few minutes a small double-knock is heard at the door, and* MR. TIBBS *comes in gently, closes the door carefully after him, puts his hat down on the floor, is accommodated with a seat, and sits looking very astounded for some minutes, during which no one speaks.*]

Mr. C. [*In a very portentous manner*] A rather unpleasant occurrence, Mr. Tibbs, obliges me to consult you, and to beg you will not communicate what I am about to say, to your wife. [TIBBS *acquiesces, wondering.*] I am placed, Mr. Tibbs, in rather an unpleasant situation.

[TIBBS *looks at* MR. SEPTIMUS HICKS, *as if he thinks* MR. H.'S *being in the immediate vicinity of his fellow-boarder might constitute the unpleasantness of his situation.*]

Mr. T. Lor!

The Boarding-House.

Mr. C. Now, let me beg you will exhibit no manifestations of surprise, which may be overheard by the domestics, when I tell you—command your feelings of astonishment—that two inmates of this house intend to be married to-morrow morning.

[*Draws back his chair several feet, to perceive the effect of the unlooked-for announcement.*]

Mr. T. [*Putting his hands into his pockets, and chuckling*] Just so.

Mr. C. You are not surprised, Mr. Tibbs?

Mr. T. Bless you, no, sir. After all, it's very natural. When two young people get together, you know——

Mr. C. [*With an indescribable air of self-satisfaction*] Certainly, certainly.

Mr. H. [*Who has watched the countenance of* TIBBS *in mute astonishment*] You don't think it's at all an out-of-the-way affair, then?

Mr. T. No, sir; I was just the same at his age.

[*Smiles when he says this.*

Mr. C. [*Aside*] How devilish well I must carry my years! Well, then, to come to the point at once. I have to ask you whether you will object to act as father on the occasion?

Mr. T. [*Still without evincing an atom of surprise*] Certainly not.

Mr. C. You will not?

Mr. T. Decidedly not.

[MR. CALTON *seizes his hand, and vows eternal friendship from that hour.* HICKS, *who is all admiration and surprise, does the same.*]

Mr. C. [*As* TIBBS *picks up his hat*] Now, confess, were you not a little surprised?

Mr. T. [*Holding up one hand, and opening the door*] I b'lieve you! I b'lieve you! When I first heard of it.

Mr. H. So sudden.

Mr. T. So strange to ask *me*, you know.

Mr. C. So odd altogether! [*All three laugh.*

Mr. T. [*Shutting the door which he has previously opened, and giving full vent to a hitherto corked-up giggle*] I say, what bothers me is, what *will* his father say? [MR. SEPTIMUS HICKS *looks at* MR. CALTON.

Mr. C. [*Giggling in his turn*] Yes; but the best of it is, I haven't got a father—he! he! he!

Mr. T. *You* haven't got a father. No; but *he* has.

Mr. H. Who has?

Mr. T. Why, *him.*

Mr. H. Him, who? Do you know my secret? Do you mean me?

Mr. T. [*With a knowing wink*] You! No; you know who I mean.

Mr. C. [*Who, like* SEPTIMUS HICKS, *is all but out of his senses at the strange confusion*] For Heaven's sake, whom *do* you mean?

Mr. T. Why, Mr. Simpson, of course. Who else could I mean?

Mr. H. I see it all. Simpson marries Julia Maplesone to-morrow morning!

Mr. T. [*Thoroughly satisfied*] Undoubtedly. Of course he does.

[*Curtain falls as* MR. C. *sinks back into his chair with a look of disgust.* MR. H. *stands scratching his head, and* MR. T. *stands chuckling audibly.*]

HORATIO SPARKINS

(FROM *Sketches by Boz*)

CHARACTERS.

MR. MALDERTON . .	*A City merchant.*
MRS. MALDERTON . .	*His wife.*
MISS TERESA MALDERTON . }	*Their daughters.*
MISS MARIANNE MALDERTON . }	
MR. THOMAS MALDERTON .	*Their son.*
MR. JACOB BARTON . .	*A grocer—brother to Mrs. Malderton.*
MR. FLAMWELL .	*A friend of Mr. Malderton.*
A LINEN-DRAPER.	
MR. "HORATIO SPARKINS" .	*A young man.*

SCENE I.—*A side room at an "Assembly."*

II.—*A room at Oak Lodge, Camberwell.*

III.—*A linen-draper's shop.*

[*Time.*—18 *minutes.*]

Description of Characters.

MR. MALDERTON: A man who, by a few successful speculations, has been raised from a situation of obscurity to a state of affluence. He and his family have a very decided horror of anything which can by possibility be considered "low." He himself is ignorant and conceited to a degree.

MRS. MALDERTON: A little fat woman, dressed in sky-blue satin, trimmed with artificial flowers, in Scenes I. and II., and looking like her eldest daughter multiplied by two. For her dress in Scene III. see illustration, page 24.

MISS TERESA MALDERTON: A very little girl of eight-and-twenty, rather fat, with vermilion cheeks, but good-humoured, and still disengaged, although, to do her justice, the misfortune has arisen from no lack of perseverance on her part.

MISS MARIANNE MALDERTON: A sentimental girl, younger than, but much like, her sister. In Scenes I. and II. both are dressed in sky-blue satin, trimmed with artificial flowers. For their dress in Scene III. see illustration, page 24.

MR. THOMAS MALDERTON: A young man, with white dress-stock, blue coat, bright buttons and red watch-ribbon. He is constantly—and unnecessarily—being checked by his father, probably with a view to prevent his becoming "sharp."

MR. JACOB BARTON: A tradesman, who is so cursedly fond of his horrid business, that he *will* let people know what he is.

MR. FLAMWELL: A little spoffish man, in green spectacles—one of those gentlemen of remarkably extensive information whom one occasionally meets in society, who pretend to know everybody, but in reality know nobody.

A LINEN-DRAPER: Undescribed, except as wearing a large white neckcloth and formal tie.

MR. "HORATIO SPARKINS": A fashionably-dressed and distinguished-looking young man, with black whiskers and hair, which latter is brushed off his forehead. Who and what he is are matters of great concern to the Maldertons, but they eventually decide that he is a barrister, and some one of great importance. In the end he turns out to be Mr. Samuel Smith, the assistant at a cheap linen-draper's shop. For his appearance in Scene III. see illustration, page 24.

SCENE I.

Arrangement of Stage.

A door at one side and another at the back of the stage. On the side opposite the first door is a fireplace. Various chairs and a sofa are scattered about. In front of the fireplace sits Mr. Malderton with his feet on the fender, and with a table, on which is a glass

of port, at his side. Near by sit Mrs. Malderton and the two Miss Maldertons, fanning themselves vigorously. At the back of the stage sits Mr. Tom Malderton, with his hands meekly crossed before him. The first-mentioned door is standing open. As the curtain rises, Mrs. Malderton is talking to her husband.

Mrs. M. [*Speaking to* MR. M.] Indeed, my love, he paid Teresa very great attention on the last assembly night, very great attention; and I say again, every possible encouragement ought to be given him. He positively must be asked down to dine.

Mr. M. Who must?

Mrs. M. Why, you know whom I mean, my dear—the young man with the black whiskers and the white cravat, who has just come out at our assembly, and whom all the girls are talking about. Young—— dear me! what's his name?—[*Turns to her youngest daughter*]—Marianne, what *is* his name?

Mar. [*With a sigh*] Mr. Horatio Sparkins, ma.

Mrs. M. Oh! yes, to be sure—Horatio Sparkins. Decidedly the most gentleman-like young man I ever saw. I am sure in the beautifully-made coat he wore the other night, he looked like—like——

Mar. [*In a tone of enthusiastic admiration*] Like Prince Leopold, ma—so noble, so full of sentiment!

Mrs. M. You should recollect, my dear, that Teresa is now eight-and-twenty; and that it really is very important that something should be done. And I am quite sure you'd like him, he is so gentlemanly!

Mar. So clever!

Ter. And has such a flow of language!

Mrs. M. [*To her husband*] He has a great respect for you, my dear.

[MR. MALDERTON *coughs, and looks at the fire.*

Mar. Yes, I'm sure he's very much attached to pa's society.

Ter. No doubt of it.

Mrs. M. Indeed, he said as much to me in confidence.

Mr. M. [*Somewhat flattered*] Well, well, if I see him at the assembly to-night, perhaps I'll ask him down. I hope he knows we live at Oak Lodge, Camberwell, my dear?

Mrs. M. Of course—and that you keep a one-horse carriage.

Mr. M. I'll see about it, I'll see about it.

[MRS. M. *gets up and walks towards the middle of the room. In doing so she happens to glance through the doorway, when she at once comes back to the family group.*]

Mrs. M. [*Whispering*] There he is, my dear, in the next room.

[*They all get up and look through the doorway.*

Ter. How like Lord Byron!

Mar. Or Montgomery!

Tom. Or the portraits of Captain Cook!

Mr. M. Tom—don't be an ass!

Ter. [*With a slight scream*] Oh! he's coming this way!

[*They all resume their places hurriedly as* HORATIO *enters. He crosses over with the most natural appearance of surprise and delight; accosts* MRS. MALDERTON *with the utmost cordiality; salutes the young ladies in the most enchanting manner; bows to, and shakes hands with,* MR. MALDERTON, *with a degree of respect amounting almost to veneration; and returns the greetings of* TOM *in a half-gratified, half-patronising manner.*]

Hor. [*After the ordinary salutations, and bowing very low*] Miss Malderton, may I be permitted to presume to hope that you will allow me to have the pleasure——

Ter. [*With an affectation of indifference*] I don't think I am engaged, but, really—so many—— [HORATIO *looks handsomely miserable.*] I shall be most happy.

[HORATIO'S *countenance brightens up, he gives her his arm, and they go off.*]

Mr. M. A very genteel young man, certainly!

[*As they go off, the* MALDERTONS *all rise and follow.*]

Tom. Yes, he is a prime fellow. He talks just like an auctioneer.

Mr. M. [*Solemnly*] Tom! I think I desired you, before, not to be a fool.

[*After a few moments* HORATIO *and* TERESA *re-enter by the other door and walk up and down.*]

Hor. How delightful!—how delightful, how refreshing it is, to retire from the cloudy storms, the vicissitudes,

and the troubles of life, even if it be but for a few short fleeting moments; and to spend those moments, fading and evanescent though they be, in the delightful, the blessed society of one individual—whose frowns would be death, whose coldness would be madness, whose falsehood would be ruin, whose constancy would be bliss; the possession of whose affection would be the brightest and best reward that Heaven could bestow on man!

Ter. [*Leaning more heavily on her companion's arm and speaking aside*] What feeling! what sentiment!

Hor. [*With a theatrical air*] But enough—enough! What have I said? What have I—I—to do with sentiments like these? Miss Malderton—[*stops short*]—may I hope to be permitted to offer the humble tribute of——

Ter. [*Enraptured, and blushing in the sweetest confusion*] Really, Mr. Sparkins, I must refer you to papa. I never can, without his consent, venture to——

Hor. Surely he cannot object——

Ter. Oh, yes. Indeed, indeed, you know him not!

Hor. [*With some surprise*] He cannot object to my offering you a glass of negus.

Ter. [*Disappointed and speaking aside*] Is that all? What a fuss about nothing!

[*Sits down as the others re-enter.*

Mr. M. It will give me the greatest pleasure, sir, to see you to dinner at Oak Lodge, Camberwell, on Sunday next at five o'clock, if you have no better engagement.

[HORATIO *bows his acknowledgments.*

I must confess—[*offering his snuff-box*]—that I don't enjoy these assemblies half so much as the comfort—I had almost said the luxury—of Oak Lodge. They have no great charms for an elderly man.

[*Goes to his chair and sits down.*

Hor. And after all, sir, what is man? I say, what is man?

Mr. M. Ah! very true, very true.

Hor. We know that we live and breathe, that we have wants and wishes, desires and appetites——

Mr. M. [*Looking profound*] Certainly.

Hor. [*Raising his voice*] I say, we know that we exist, but there we stop; there is an end to our knowledge; there is the summit of our attainments; there is the termination of our ends. What more do we know?

Mr. M. Nothing. [HORATIO *goes off to fetch the*

negus.] Upon my word, that Mr. Sparkins is a wonderful young man. Such surprising knowledge! such extraordinary information! and such a splendid mode of expressing himself!

Mar. I think he must be somebody in disguise. How charmingly romantic!

Tom. [*Timidly*] He talks very loud and nicely, but I don't exactly understand what he means.

Mr. M. I almost begin to despair of *your* understanding anything, Tom.

Ter. It strikes me, Tom, that you have made yourself very ridiculous this evening.

All. No doubt of it. [*Curtain falls.*

SCENE II.

Arrangement of Stage.

The same furniture can be used as in Scene I., but it should be rearranged. There should be a looking-glass over the fireplace. At the back of the stage should be a side-table on which are decanters, wine-glasses and cigars. There must be a window somewhere. When the curtain rises, the three ladies are seated near the fire, Tom is lolling about near the window and Mr. M. is walking impatiently up and down in front of the stage, smoking a cigar.

Mr. M. Upon my word, my dear, it's a most annoying thing that that vulgar brother of yours should have invited himself to dine here to-day. On account of Mr. Sparkins's coming down, I purposely abstained from asking any one but Flamwell. And then to think of your brother—a tradesman—it's insufferable! I declare I wouldn't have him mention his shop, before our new guest—no, not for a thousand pounds! I wouldn't care if he had the good sense to conceal the disgrace he is to the family; but he's so fond of his horrid business, that he *will* let people know what he is. [*The door opens and a voice outside announces* MR. FLAMWELL. MR. F. *comes forward.*] Ah! Flamwell, my dear fellow, how d'ye do? You got my note?

Mr. F. Yes, I did; and here I am in consequence.

[*Shakes hands with the ladies and nods to Tom.*

Mr. M. You don't happen to know this Mr. Sparkins by name? You know everybody!

[*Offers* MR. F. *cigars.*

Mr. F. [*In a low tone, and with an air of immense importance*] Why, no, I don't know him by that name. I have no doubt I know him, though. Is he tall?

Ter. Middle-sized.

Mr. F. [*Hazarding a bold guess*] With black hair?

Ter. [*Eagerly*] Yes.

Mr. F. Rather a snub nose?

Ter. [*Disappointed*] No, he has a Roman nose.

Mr. F. I said a Roman nose, didn't I? He's an elegant young man?

Ter. Oh, certainly.

Mr. F. With remarkably prepossessing manners?

All. Oh, yes!

Ter. You must know him.

Mr. M. [*Triumphantly*] Yes, I thought you knew him, if he was anybody. Who d'ye think he is?

Mr. F. [*Ruminating, and sinking his voice almost to a whisper*] Why, from your description, he bears a strong resemblance to the Honourable Augustus Fitz-Edward Fitz-John Fitz-Osborne. He's a very talented young man, and rather eccentric. It's extremely probable he may have changed his name for some temporary purpose.

Ter. [*Aside*] Oh! What a name to be elegantly engraved upon two glazed cards, tied together with a piece of white satin ribbon! "The Honourable Mrs. Augustus Fitz-Edward Fitz-John Fitz-Osborne!"

Mr. M. [*Looking at his watch*] It's five minutes to five. I hope he's not going to disappoint us.

Ter. [*As a loud double-knock is heard at the door*] There he is!

[*All endeavour to look as if they are perfectly unsuspicious of the approach of anybody. The room-door opens and a voice outside announces* MR. BARTON!]

Mr. M. [*Aside*] Confound the man! [*Advancing*] Ah! my dear sir, how d'ye do! Any news?

Mr. B. [*In a bluff manner*] Why, no. No, none particklar. None that I am much aware of. How d'ye do, gals and boys? Mr. Flamwell, sir—glad to see you.

Tom. [*Who has been looking out at the window*] Here's Mr. Sparkins! on *such* a black horse!

[*Slight screams from the girls, who at once jump up and run to the window. The others endeavour to look over them into the garden. Then they come away from the window, and the girls run to the looking-glass and pat their hair in various places.* MRS. M. *puts her dress straight and they arrange themselves in becoming attitudes. The gentlemen sit about and resume their cigars. The door opens and a voice outside announces* "MR. HORATIO SPARKINS." *He advances towards the ladies and bows gracefully, shakes hands with* MR. M. *and is introduced to* MR. F. *and* MR. B. *Then they reseat themselves,* MR. F. *being close to* MRS. M.]

Mrs. M. [*Whispering to* MR. F.] Is he the Honourable Mr. Augustus—What's-his-name?

Mr. F. Why, no—at least not exactly, not exactly.

Mrs. M. Who *is* he, then?

Mr. F. [*Nodding his head with a grave air, importing that he knows very well; but is prevented, by some grave reasons of state, from disclosing the important secret*] Hush!

Mr. M. [*Casting a sidelong look at* HORATIO, *to see what effect the mention of so great a man has upon him*] Have you seen your friend, Sir Thomas Noland, lately, Flamwell?

Mr. F. Why, no—not very lately. I saw Lord Gubbleton the day before yesterday.

Mr. M. [*In a tone of the greatest interest*] Ah! I hope his lordship is very well? [*Takes cigars to* HOR.

Mr. F. Why, yes; he was very well—very well indeed. He's a devilish good fellow. I met him in the City, and had a long chat with him. Indeed, I'm rather intimate with him. I couldn't stop to talk to him as long as I could wish, though, because I was on my way to a banker's, a very rich man, and a member of Parliament, with whom I am also rather, indeed I may say very, intimate.

Mr. M. [*Consequentially*] I know whom you mean. He has a capital business.

Mr. B. [*Interposing*] Talking of business, a gentleman whom you knew very well, Malderton, before you made that first lucky spec of yours, called at our shop the other day, and——

Mr. M. [*Interrupting, and hoping to nip the story in the bud*] Barton, may I trouble you for some wine?

Mr. B. [*Quite insensible of his brother-in-law's object*] Certainly, and he said in a very plain manner——

Mr. M. [*Interrupting again*] Half-a-glass, if you please.

[MR. B. *pours out the wine, crosses over to* MR. M., *and resumes.*]

Mr. B. He said, says he, how goes on your business? So I said, jokingly—you know my way—says I, I'm never above my business, and I hope my business will never be above me. Ha! ha!

Mr. M. [*Vainly endeavouring to conceal his dismay*] Mr. Sparkins, a glass of wine?

Hor. With the utmost pleasure, sir.

[MR. M. *rises to get it.*

Mr. M. [*Addressing* HORATIO] We were talking the other evening—we were talking the other night about the nature of man. Your argument struck me very forcibly.

[HORATIO *makes a graceful inclination of the head.*

Mrs. M. Pray, what is your opinion of woman, Mr. Sparkins? [*The young ladies simper.*

Hor. Man—man, whether he ranged the bright, gay, flowery plains of a second Eden, or the more sterile, barren, and, I may say, commonplace regions, to which we are compelled to accustom ourselves in times such as these; man, under any circumstances, or in any place—whether he were bending beneath the withering blasts of the frigid zone, or scorching under the rays of a vertical sun—man, without woman, would be—alone.

Mrs. M. I am very happy to find you entertain such honourable opinions, Mr. Sparkins.

Ter. And I.

[HORATIO *looks his delight, and the young lady blushes.*]

Mr. B. Now, it's my opinion——

Mr. M. [*Interposing, and determined not to give his relation another opportunity*] I know what you're going to say, and I don't agree with you.

Mr. B. [*Astonished*] What!

Mr. M. [*In a positive manner*] I am sorry to differ from you, Barton, but I cannot give my assent to what I consider a very monstrous proposition.

Mr. B. But I meant to say——

Mr. M. [*With an air of obstinate determination*] You never can convince me. Never.

Hor. What! what! Is effect the consequence of cause? Is cause the precursor of effect?

Mr. F. That's the point.

Mr. M. To be sure.

Hor. Because, if effect is the consequence of cause, and if cause does precede effect, I apprehend you are wrong.

Mr. F. Decidedly.

Hor. [*In a tone of interrogation*] At least, I apprehend that to be the just and logical deduction?

Mr. F. No doubt of it. It settles the point.

Mr. B. I don't exactly see it does; but I suppose it's all right. [*The ladies rise and go out.*

Mrs. M. [*Whispering to her daughters*] How wonderfully clever he is!

Ter. Oh, he's quite a love! he talks like an oracle. He must have seen a great deal of life.

[*The gentlemen being left to themselves, a pause ensues, during which all look very grave, as if they are quite overcome by the profound nature of the previous discussion.* MR. F. *first breaks silence.*]

Mr. F. Excuse me, sir, I presume you have studied for the bar? I thought of entering once, myself—indeed, I'm rather intimate with some of the highest ornaments of that distinguished profession.

Hor. [*With a little hesitation*] N-no! not exactly.

Mr. F. [*Deferentially*] But you have been much among the silk gowns, or I mistake?

Hor. Nearly all my life.

Mr. F. [*Aside to* MR. M.] That settles it. He is a young gentleman about to be called.

Tom. [*Speaking for the first time, and looking round to find somebody who will notice the remark*] I shouldn't like to be a barrister. [*No one makes any reply, and he therefore hazards another observation.*] I shouldn't like to wear a wig.

Mr. M. Tom, I beg you will not make yourself ridiculous. Pray listen, and improve yourself by the conversation you hear, and don't be constantly making these absurd remarks.

Tom. Very well, father.

Mr. B. Well, Tom, never mind! *I* think with you. *I* shouldn't like to wear a wig. I'd rather wear an apron.

[MR. MALDERTON *coughs violently.*] For if a man's above his business——

[*The cough returns with tenfold violence, and does not cease until the unfortunate cause of it, in his alarm, has quite forgotten what he intended to say.*]

Mr. F. Mr. Sparkins, do you happen to know Mr. Delafontaine, of Bedford Square?

Hor. I have exchanged cards with him; since which, indeed, I have had an opportunity of serving him considerably.

Mr. F. [*With an air of profound respect*] You are very lucky, if you have had an opportunity of obliging that great man. [*Whispers to* MR. MALDERTON, *confidentially.*] I don't know who he is. It's quite clear, however, that he belongs to the law, and that he is somebody of great importance, and very highly connected.

[*A gong sounds. The company rise to go to dinner, and the curtain falls.*]

SCENE III.

Arrangement of Stage.

As the interior of a small shop, with a counter running along at the back and shelves behind as in the illustration on page 24. In front of the counter are three chairs. Prominently displayed is a big printed bill—Important Sale—Every Description of Goods at 50 per cent. under Cost Price—350,000 Ladies' Boas from 1*s.* 1½*d.*—Real French Kid Shoes at 2*s.* 9*d.* per pair—Green Parasols, 1*s.* 6¾*d.* As the curtain rises, the linen-draper is standing by the open door. Enter Mrs. M. and the two Misses M. The L.-D. bows and places chairs for them.

Ter. Lor! ma, what a place you have brought us to! What *would* Mr. Sparkins say if he could see us!

Mar. [*Horrified at the idea*] Ah, what, indeed!

L.-D. Pray be seated, ladies. What is the first article?

[*They all sit.*

Mrs. M. I want to see some silks.

Horatio Sparkins.

L.-D. Directly, ma'am.—Mr. Smith! Where *is* Mr. Smith?

[*Voice at back of stage*] Here, sir.

L.-D. Pray make haste, Mr. Smith. You never are to be found when you're wanted, sir.

[MR. SMITH, *thus enjoined to use all possible dispatch, runs in at the other door, and places himself before the newly-arrived customers.* MRS. MALDERTON *utters a faint scream;* MISS TERESA, *who has been stooping down to talk to her sister, raises her head, and beholds*—HORATIO SPARKINS!] [*Curtain falls.*

MISS SQUEERS' TEA-PARTY

(FROM *Nicholas Nickleby*)

CHARACTERS.

FANNY SQUEERS . .	*Daughter of Mr. Wackford Squeers, the Proprietor of Do-the-boys Hall.*
MATILDA PRICE . .	*A miller's daughter, and Miss Squeers' bosom friend.*
JOHN BROWDIE . .	*A Yorkshire corn-factor.*
NICHOLAS NICKLEBY .	*Mr. Squeers' usher, lately come to Do-the-boys Hall.*

SCENE.—*The parlour at Do-the-boys Hall.*
[*Time.*—16 *minutes.*]

Description of Characters.

FANNY SQUEERS: A young lady in her three-and-twentieth year. She is short in build, and inherits from her mother a voice of harsh quality and from her father a remarkable expression of the right eye, something akin to having none at all. She is here dressed out to the best advantage, with her hair—it has more than a tinge of red, and she wears it in a crop—curled in five distinct rows up to the very top of her head, and arranged dexterously over the doubtful eye. She wears a blue sash, which floats down her back, a worked apron, long gloves, and a green gauze scarf, worn over one shoulder and under the other.

MATILDA PRICE: A young lady of eighteen, pretty, and a coquette by nature. For her general appearance see illustration to *Nicholas Nickleby*, page 473: "Mr. Snawley Enlarges on Parental Instinct."

JOHN BROWDIE: A huge, bluff, good-natured Yorkshireman, who comes in with his hair very damp from recent washing; and a clean shirt, whereof the collar might have belonged to some giant ancestor, forming, together with a white waistcoat of similar dimensions, the chief ornament of his person. He also wears cords and leather leggings. See illustration as above.

NICHOLAS NICKLEBY: A young man of nineteen, with a somewhat slight, but manly and well-formed figure, and an open, handsome, and ingenuous face. Having recently lost his father, he is dressed entirely in black, and is decidedly out of spirits when the scene opens. For his general appearance see illustration to *Nicholas Nickleby*, page 19: "Mr. Ralph Nickleby's First Visit to His Poor Relations."

Arrangement of Stage.

A fireplace on one side, with door opposite to it. Over the fireplace should be a looking-glass. About the centre of the stage a round mahogany table laid for tea. Four chairs placed ready. A sofa at the back. A tea-pot stands warming in the hearth, the tea being already made. Lighted candles on the table.

When the curtain rises, Miss Squeers is standing in a pensive mood against the fireplace. Matilda Price enters, and Miss Squeers at once skips across to her, and relieves her of a small whitey-brown parcel—flat and three-cornered—which she carries. Before Matilda has time to say anything, Fanny begins.

F. Oh, 'Tilda dear, I'm so glad you've come. Do you know I'm—not exactly *engaged*, but going to be—to a gentleman's son.

M. [*Kissing her*] Are you, dear? How nice!

F. Yes—none of your *corn-factors*, but a gentleman's son of high descent——

M. [*Interrupting*] Oh, indeed!

[*Goes off with her nose in the air and takes off her bonnet at the glass.*]

F. [*Continuing*] Who has come down as teacher for my pa under most mysterious and remarkable circumstances. [*Goes close to* MATILDA, *who is giving her hair various pulls at the glass.*] And, 'Tilda, he *has* a beautiful smile. [*Sighs deeply.*] And his *legs*—[*holds up her hands expressively*]—I never saw such legs in the whole course of my life. [*Skips away to the tea-table.*] Now, isn't it an *extraordinary* thing?

M. Most extraordinary. But what has he said to you?

[*Sits down on the sofa.*

F. Don't ask me what he said, my dear. If you had only seen his looks and smiles! I never was so overcome in all my life.

M. Did he look in this way?

[*Counterfeits, as nearly as she can, a favourite leer of the corn-factor.*]

F. Very like that—only more genteel.

M. Ah! then he means something, depend on it. How I should like to see him!

F. So you shall, 'Tilda. I should consider myself one of the most ungrateful creatures alive, if I denied you. Mother's gone away for two days to fetch some boys; and that's why I've asked you and John up to tea. Mr. Nickleby will be here at five o'clock.

M. [*Getting up with great haste*] Good gracious me, and it's nearly that now. You must help me to do my hair quickly before he comes.

[*Unties the paper parcel, taking out a comb and sundry small adornments.* MISS SQUEERS "*does*" MATILDA'S *hair, and then* MATILDA "*does*" *hers, and the adornments are put on, the brown paper and comb being then hidden away under the sofa.*]

F. Where's John, 'Tilda?

M. Only gone home to clean himself. He will be here by the time the tea's drawn.

F. I do so palpitate. [*Places the tea-pot on the table.*

M. Ah! I know what it is.

F. [*Applying her hand to the left side of her sash*] I have not been used to it, you know, 'Tilda.

M. You'll soon get the better of it, dear.

[*Somebody taps at the door.*

F. There he is! Oh 'Tilda!

M. Hush! Hem! Say, "Come in."

F. [*Faintly*] Come in. [NICHOLAS *walks in.*

N. [*Unconscious of his conquest*] Good evening. I understood from Mr. Squeers that——

F. Oh yes; it's all right. Father don't tea with us, but you won't mind that, I dare say. [NICHOLAS *opens his eyes at this, but he turns the matter off very coolly, and goes through the ceremony of introduction to* MISS PRICE *with so much grace, that that young lady is lost in admiration.* MISS SQUEERS *then takes off the tea-pot lid, and looks in to see how the tea is getting on*] We are only waiting for one more gentleman.

[NICHOLAS *receives the intelligence with perfect unconcern; and, being out of spirits, and not seeing any especial reason why he should make himself agreeable, looks out of the window and sighs involuntarily. Hereupon* MISS PRICE *takes it into her head to rally the lovers on their lowness of spirits.*]

M. If it's caused by *my* being here, don't mind me a bit, for I'm quite as bad. You may go on just as you would if you were alone.

F. [*Colouring*] 'Tilda, I am ashamed of you.

[*Here the two friends burst into a variety of giggles, and glance from time to time, over the tops of their pocket-handkerchiefs, at* NICHOLAS, *who from a state of unmixed astonishment, gradually falls into one of irrepressible laughter—occasioned, partly by the bare notion of his being in love with* MISS SQUEERS, *and partly by the preposterous appearance and behaviour of the two girls.*]

N. [*Aside*] Well, as I am here and seem expected, for some reason or other, to be amiable, it's of no use looking like a goose. I may as well accommodate myself to the company.

[*He no sooner forms this resolution than he salutes* MISS SQUEERS *and her friend with great gallantry, and drawing a chair to the tea-table, begins to make himself at home. As he does so the expected swain arrives.*]

M. Well, John.

J. [*With a grin that even his collar cannot conceal*] Weel.

F. [*Hastening to do the honours*] I beg your pardon. Mr. Nickleby—Mr. John Browdie.

J. Servant, sir.

[*Bows awkwardly and sits down at the table.*

N. Yours to command, sir.

[*Makes fearful ravages on the bread and butter.* MR. BROWDIE *grins twice more, and having now bestowed his customary mark of recognition on every person in company, grins at nothing particular, and helps himself to food.*]

J. [*With his mouth full*] Old wooman awa', bean't she? [MISS SQUEERS *nods assent.* MR. BROWDIE *gives a grin of special width, as if he thinks that really is something to laugh at, and goes to work at the bread and butter with increased vigour. After staring at* NICHOLAS *a long time he continues.*] Ye wean't get bread and butther ev'ery neight, I expect, mun. [NICHOLAS *bites his lip, and colours, but affects not to hear the remark.* MR. BROWDIE *laughs boisterously.*] Ecod, they dean't put too much intiv'em. Ye'll be nowt but skeen and boans if you stop here long eneaf. Ho! ho! ho!

N. [*Scornfully*] You are facetious, sir.

J. Na; I dean't know, but t'oother teacher, 'cod he wur a learn 'un, he wur.

[*The recollection of the last teacher's leanness seems to afford* MR. BROWDIE *the most exquisite delight, for he laughs until he finds it necessary to apply his coat-cuffs to his eyes.*]

N. [*In a towering passion*] I don't know whether your perceptions are quite keen enough, Mr. Browdie, to enable you to understand that your remarks are offensive; but if they are, have the goodness to——

M. [*Stopping her admirer's mouth as he is about to interrupt*] If you say another word, John, only half a word, I'll never forgive you, or speak to you again.

J. Weel, my lass, I dean't care aboot 'un. [*Bestows a hearty kiss on* MATILDA.] Let 'un gang on, let 'un gang on.

[*Here* MISS SQUEERS *is overcome and sheds tears.*

M. What's the matter, Fanny?

F. [*Sobbing*] Nothing, 'Tilda.

M. There never was any danger, was there, Mr. Nickleby?

N. None at all. Absurd.

M. [*Whispering to* NICHOLAS] That's right; say something kind to her, and she'll soon come round. Here! Shall John and I go into the little kitchen, and come back presently?

N. [*Quite alarmed at the proposition*] Not on any account. What on earth should you do that for?

M. [*Beckoning him aside, and speaking with some degree of contempt*] Well, you are a one to keep company.

N. What do you mean? I am not a one to keep company at all—here at all events. I can't make this out.

M. No, nor I neither. But men are always fickle, and always were, and always will be; that I can make out, very easily.

N. Fickle! what do you suppose? You don't mean to say that you think——

M. [*Pettishly*] Oh no, I think nothing at all. Look at her, dressed so beautiful and looking so well—really *almost* handsome. I am ashamed at you.

N. My dear girl, what have I got to do with her dressing beautifully or looking well?

M. Come, don't call me a dear girl—[*smiles a little as though she is gratified to think she has made an impression on him*]—or Fanny will be saying it's my fault. Come; we're going to have a game at cards.

[*Trips away and rejoins* MR. BROWDIE.

[NICHOLAS *has not time to enlighten himself by reflection, for the hearth being swept up, the tea-things removed, and a pack of cards and a Do-the-boys Hall card of terms produced, they sit down to play Speculation.*]

F. [*Looking slyly at* NICHOLAS] There are only four of us, 'Tilda, so we had better go partners, two against two.

M. What do you say, Mr. Nickleby?

N. With all the pleasure in life.

[*So saying, quite unconscious of his heinous offence, he amalgamates into one common heap those portions of the Do-the-boys Hall card of terms which represent his own counters, and those allotted to* MISS PRICE, *respectively.*]

F. [*Hysterically*] Mr. Browdie, shall we make a bank against them?

[MR. BROWDIE *assents—apparently quite overwhelmed by the new usher's impudence—and* MISS

SQUEERS *darts a spiteful look at her friend, and giggles convulsively. The deal falls to* NICHOLAS, *and the hand prospers.*]

N. We intend to win everything.

F. [*Maliciously*] 'Tilda has won something she didn't expect, I think, haven't you, dear?

M. [*Affecting to take the question in a literal sense*] Only a dozen and eight, love.

F. How dull you are to-night!

M. No, indeed. I am in excellent spirits. I was thinking *you* seemed out of sorts.

F. [*Biting her lips, and trembling with jealousy*] Me! Oh no!

M. That's well. Your hair's coming out of curl, dear.

F. Never mind me. You had better attend to your partner.

N. Thank you for reminding her. So she had.

[*Here* MR. BROWDIE, *who has been glaring at* NICHOLAS *for some time, flattens his nose once or twice with his clenched fist, as if to keep his hand in till he has an opportunity of exercising it upon the features of some other gentleman; and* MISS SQUEERS *tosses her head with indignation.*]

M. [*After another hand or two*] I never had such luck, really. It's all along of you, Mr. Nickleby, I think. I should like to have you for a partner always.

N. I wish you had.

M. You'll have a bad wife, though, if you always win at cards.

N. Not if your wish is gratified. I am sure I shall have a good one in that case. [*During this conversation* MISS SQUEERS *again tosses her head, and the corn-factor again flattens his nose.* MISS PRICE *shows evident joy at making them jealous, and* NICHOLAS *is happily unconscious of making anybody uncomfortable. He looks good-humouredly round the table as he takes up the cards for a fresh deal.*] We have all the talking to ourselves, it seems.

F. You do it so well, that it would be a pity to interrupt; wouldn't it, Mr. Browdie? He! he! he!

N. Nay, we do it in default of having anybody else to talk to.

M. We'll talk to you, you know, if you'll say anything.

F. [*Majestically*] Thank you, 'Tilda, dear.

M. Or you can talk to each other, if you don't choose to talk to us. John, why don't you say something?

J. Say summat?

M. Ay, and not sit there so silent and glum.

J. [*Striking the table heavily with his fist*] Weel, then! what I say's this—Dang my boans and boddy, if I stan' this ony longer. Do ye gang whoam wi' me, and do yon loight an' toight young whipster look sharp out for a brokken head next time he cums under my hond.

M. [*In affected astonishment*] Mercy on us, what's all this?

J. [*Sternly*] Cum whoam, tell 'e, cum whoam.

[*As he delivers this reply,* MISS SQUEERS *bursts into a shower of tears, and shows an impotent desire to lacerate somebody's countenance with her fair finger-nails.*]

M. [*As if in fresh amazement*] Why, and here's Fanny in tears now! What can be the matter?

F. [*Producing that change of countenance which children call making a face*] Oh! you don't know, Miss, of course you don't know. Pray don't trouble yourself to inquire.

M. Well, I'm sure!

F. [*Making another face*] And who cares whether you are sure or not, ma'am?

M. You are monstrous polite, ma'am.

F. I shall not come to you to take lessons in the art, ma'am!

M. You needn't take the trouble to make yourself plainer than you are, ma'am, however; because that's quite unnecessary. [*Puts on her bonnet.*

F. [*Turning very red and speaking with dignity*] 'Tilda, I hate you.

M. [*Tying her bonnet strings with a jerk*] Ah! There's no love lost between us, I assure you. You'll cry your eyes out when I'm gone; you know you will.

F. I scorn your words, Minx.

M. [*Curtseying very low*] You pay me a great compliment when you say so. Wish you a very good night, ma'am, and pleasant dreams attend your sleep!

[*With this parting benediction* MISS PRICE *sweeps from the room, followed by* MR. BROWDIE, *who exchanges with* NICHOLAS, *at parting, that peculiarly expressive scowl with which the cut-and-*

thrust counts, in melodramatic performances, inform each other they will meet again.

They are no sooner gone, than MISS SQUEERS *fulfils the prediction of her quondam friend by giving vent to a most copious burst of tears, and uttering various dismal lamentations and incoherent words.* NICHOLAS *stands looking on for a few seconds, rather doubtful what to do; but feeling uncertain whether the fit will end in his being embraced, or scratched, and considering that either infliction would be equally agreeable, he walks off very quietly while* MISS SQUEERS *is moaning in her pocket-handkerchief.*] [*Curtain falls.*

THE GENTLEMAN NEXT DOOR

(FROM *Nicholas Nickleby*)

CHARACTERS.

MRS. NICKLEBY . .	*A widow.*
KATE NICKLEBY . .	*Her daughter.*
THE GENTLEMAN NEXT DOOR	*A harmless lunatic.*

SCENE.—*The garden of Mrs. Nickleby's cottage at Bow.*
[*Time.*—20 *minutes.*]

Description of Characters.

MRS. NICKLEBY: A middle-aged woman; well-meaning enough, but with a weak head and a vain one, though she is commonly in the habit of giving herself credit for a pretty tolerable share of penetration and acuteness. She is also in the habit of falling imperceptibly into a retrospective mood, and of giving ready utterance to whatever comes uppermost in her mind, with an air of much solemnity and importance. For her dress—which is of half-mourning—see illustration on page 41.

KATE NICKLEBY: A slight but very beautiful girl of about eighteen, timid and retiring by nature. For her dress see illustration on page 41.

THE GENTLEMAN NEXT DOOR: An elderly man with a very large and perfectly bald head and an old face, in which are a pair of extraordinary grey eyes, very wild, very wide open, and rolling in their sockets with a dull, leering look. He wears smalls and grey worsted stockings and an old black velvet cap. See illustration on page 41, and—for his legs—*Nicholas Nickleby*, page 518: "Mysterious Appearance of the Gentleman in the Small-clothes."

Arrangement of Stage.

At the back of the stage a small summer-house with a seat. Across one corner of the stage from this should be constructed a garden wall, sufficiently strong to bear the weight of a person when standing upon it. The floor of the stage is made to represent a gravel path running along by the wall, and the rest bare mould. Two pot-plants stand by the wall at the entrance to the summer-house. Inside the summer-house, on the side away from the wall, is a wicker garden-chair. Near the front of the stage, opposite the wall, there are two other rustic chairs—or a garden-seat—and a small table on which are a work-basket and some articles of sewing.

When the curtain rises, Mrs. Nickleby and Kate are seen seated here—Kate engaged in sewing, while her mother is sitting with her hands folded in her lap.

Mrs. N. Kate, my dear, I don't know how it is, but a fine warm summer day like this, with the birds singing in every direction, always puts me in mind of roast pig, with sage and onion sauce, and made gravy.

K. [*Looking up from her work*] That's a curious association of ideas, is it not, mama?

Mrs. N. Upon my word, my dear, I don't know. Roast pig—let me see. On the day five weeks after you were christened, we had a roast—no, that couldn't have been a pig, either, because I recollect there were a pair of them to carve, and your poor papa and I could never have thought of sitting down to two pigs—they must have been partridges. Roast pig! I hardly think we ever could have had one, now I come to remember, for your papa could never bear the sight of them in the shops, and used to say that they always put him in mind of very little babies, only the pigs had much fairer complexions; and he had a horror of little babies, too, because he couldn't very well afford any increase to his family, and had a natural dislike to the subject. It's very odd now, what can have put that in my head! I recollect dining once at Mrs. Bevan's, in that broad street round the corner by the coachmaker's, where the tipsy man fell through the cellar-

flap of an empty house nearly a week before the quarter-day, and wasn't found till the new tenant went in—and we had roast pig there. It must be that, I think, that reminds me of it, especially as there was a little bird in the room that would keep on singing all the time of dinner—at least, not a little bird, for it was a parrot, and he didn't sing exactly, for he talked and swore dreadfully; but I think it must be that. Indeed I am sure it must. Shouldn't you say so, my dear?

K. [*With a cheerful smile*] I should say there was not a doubt about it, mama.

Mrs. N. [*With as much gravity as if it were a question of the most imminent and thrilling interest*] No; but *do* you think so, Kate? If you don't, say so at once, you know; because it's just as well to be correct, particularly on a point of this kind, which is very curious and worth settling while one thinks about it.

K. [*Laughing*] Oh yes, mama, I'm quite convinced about it. But don't you think we might take our work into the summer-house and enjoy the beauty of the afternoon?

[*Rises with her work.* MRS. NICKLEBY *also rises, and they pass back to the summer-house.*]

Mrs. N. [*As she takes her seat*] Well, I will say that there never was such a good creature as Smike. Upon my word, the pains he has taken in putting this little arbour to rights, and training the sweetest flowers about it, are beyond anything I could have——I wish he wouldn't put *all* the gravel on your side, Kate, my dear, though, and leave nothing but mould for me.

K. [*Hastily*] Dear mama, take this seat—do—to oblige me, mama.

Mrs. N. No, indeed, my dear. I shall keep my own side. Well! I declare! [KATE *looks up inquiringly.*] If he hasn't been and got, from somewhere or other, a couple of roots of those flowers that I said I was so fond of, the other night, and asked you if you were not—no, that *you* said *you* were so fond of, the other night, and asked me if I wasn't—it's the same thing. Now, upon my word, I take that as very kind and attentive indeed! [*Looks narrowly about her.*] I don't see any of them, on my side, but I suppose they grow best near the gravel. You may depend upon it they do, Kate, and that's the reason they are all near you, and he has put the gravel there, because

it's the sunny side. Upon my word, that's very clever now! I shouldn't have had half so much thought myself!

K. [*Bending over her work so that her face is almost hidden*] Mama, before you were married——

Mrs. N. [*Interrupting*] Dear me, Kate, what in the name of goodness graciousness makes you fly off to the time before I was married, when I'm talking to you about his thoughtfulness and attention to me? You don't seem to take the smallest interest in the garden.

K. [*Raising her face again*] Oh! mama, you know I do.

Mrs. N. Well, then, my dear, why don't you praise the neatness and prettiness with which it's kept? How very odd you are, Kate!

K. [*Gently*] I do praise it, mama. Poor fellow!

Mrs. N. I scarcely ever hear you, my dear; that's all I've got to say. But what was it you asked me?

K. About what, mama?

Mrs. N. Lor, Kate, my dear, why, you're asleep or stupid! About the time before I was married.

K. Oh yes! I remember. I was going to ask, mama, before you were married, had you many suitors?

Mrs. N. [*With a smile of wonderful complacency*] Suitors, my dear! First and last, Kate, I must have had a dozen at least.

K. [*In a tone of remonstrance*] Mama!

Mrs. N. I had indeed, my dear; not including your poor papa, or a young gentleman who used to go, at that time, to the same dancing school, and who *would* send gold watches and bracelets to our house in gilt-edged paper (which were always returned), and who afterwards unfortunately went out to Botany Bay in a cadet ship—a convict ship I mean—and escaped into a bush and killed sheep (I don't know how they got there), and was going to be hung, only he accidentally choked himself, and the Government pardoned him. Then there was young Lukin [*begins with her left thumb and checks off the names on her fingers*]—Mogley—Tipslark—Cabbery—Smifser——

[*Having now reached her little finger,* MRS. NICKLEBY *is carrying the account over to the other hand, when a loud "*Hem!*" which appears to come from the very foundation of the garden wall, gives both herself and her daughter a violent start.*]

K. [*In a low voice*] Mama! what was that?

Mrs. N. [*Considerably startled*] Upon my word, my

dear, unless it was the gentleman belonging to the next house, I don't know what it could possibly—— ["A-hem" *cries the same voice, in a kind of bellow.*] I understand it now, my dear. [*Lays her hand on* KATE's.] Don't be alarmed, my love, it's not directed to you, and is not intended to frighten anybody. Let us give everybody their due, Kate; I'm bound to say that.

[*Here* MRS. NICKLEBY *nods her head, and pats the back of her daughter's hand a great many times, and looks as if she could tell something vastly important if she chose, but has self-denial, and will not do it.*]

K. [*In evident surprise*] What do you mean, mama?

Mrs. N. [*Looking towards the garden wall*] Don't be flurried, my dear. For you see *I'm* not, and if it would be excusable in anybody to be flurried, it certainly would —under all the circumstances—be excusable in me, but I am not, Kate, not at all.

K. It seems designed to attract our attention, mama.

Mrs. N. It *is* designed to attract our attention, my dear; [*draws herself up and pats her daughter's hand more blandly than before*] at least to attract the attention of one of us. Hem! you needn't be at all uneasy, my dear.

[KATE *looks very much perplexed, and is apparently about to ask for further explanation, when a shouting and scuffling noise, as of an* OLD GENTLEMAN *whooping, and kicking up his legs on loose gravel with great violence, is heard to proceed from the same direction as the former sounds; and, before they have subsided, a large cucumber is seen to shoot up in the air and fall at* MRS. NICKLEBY'S *feet. This remarkable appearance is succeeded by another of a precisely similar description; then a fine vegetable marrow, of unusually large dimensions, is seen to whirl aloft, and come toppling down; then several cucumbers shoot up together; finally, the air is darkened by a shower of onions, turnip-radishes, and other small vegetables, which fall rolling and scattering, and bumping about, in all directions. As* KATE *rises from her seat in some alarm, and catches her mother's hand to run with her into the house, she feels herself rather retarded than assisted in her intention; and follow-*

ing the direction of MRS. NICKLEBY'S *eyes, is quite terrified by the apparition of an old black velvet cap, which, by slow degrees, as if its wearer is ascending a ladder or a pair of steps, rises above the wall, and is gradually followed by a head.*]

K. [*Really terrified for the moment*] Mama! why do you stop, why do you lose an instant? Mama, pray come in!

Mrs. N. [*Still holding back*] Kate, my dear, how can you be so foolish? I'm ashamed of you. How do you suppose you are ever to get through life, if you're such a coward as this! What do you want, sir? [*Addresses the intruder with a sort of simpering displeasure.*] How dare you look into this garden?

O. G. [*Folding his hands together*] Queen of my soul, this goblet sip!

Mrs. N. Nonsense, sir. Kate, my love, pray be quiet.

O. G. [*With his head imploringly on one side, and his right hand on his breast*] Won't you sip the goblet? Oh, do sip the goblet!

Mrs. N. I shall not consent to do anything of the kind, sir. Pray, begone.

O. G. [*Coming up a step higher, and leaning his elbows on the wall, with as much complacency as if he were looking out of a window*] Why is it that beauty is always obdurate, even when admiration is as honourable and respectful as mine? [*Here he smiles, kisses his hand, and makes several low bows.*] Is it owing to the bees, who, when the honey season is over, and they are supposed to have been killed with brimstone, in reality fly to Barbary and lull the captive Moors to sleep with their drowsy songs? Or is it [*drops his voice almost to a whisper*] in consequence of the statue at Charing Cross having been lately seen on the Stock Exchange at midnight, walking arm-in-arm with the Pump from Aldgate, in a riding-habit?

K. Mama, do you hear him?

Mrs. N. Hush, my dear! he is very polite, and I think that was a quotation from the poets. Pray, don't worry me so—you'll pinch my arm black and blue. Go away, sir!

O. G. [*With a languishing look*] Quite away? Oh! quite away?

Mrs. N. Yes, certainly. You have no business here. This is private property, sir; you ought to know that.

The Gentleman Next Door Declares his Passion for Mrs. Nickleby.

O. G. [*Laying his finger on his nose, with an air of familiarity, most reprehensible*] I do know that this is a sacred and enchanted spot, where the most divine charms [*here he kisses his hand and bows again*] waft mellifluousness over the neighbours' gardens, and force the fruit and vegetables into premature existence. That fact I am acquainted with. But will you permit me, fairest creature, to ask you one question, in the absence of the planet Venus, who has gone on business to the Horse Guards, and would otherwise—jealous of your superior charms—interpose between us?

Mrs. N. Kate, it's very awkward, positively. I really don't know what to say to this gentleman. One ought to be civil, you know.

K. Dear mama, don't say a word to him, but let us run away, as fast as we can, and shut ourselves up till Nicholas comes home.

[MRS. NICKLEBY *looks very grand, not to say contemptuous, at this humiliating proposal; and turns to the* OLD GENTLEMAN, *who has watched them during these whispers with absorbing eagerness.*]

Mrs. N. If you will conduct yourself, sir, like the gentleman I should imagine you to be, from your language and —and—appearance (quite the counterpart of your grandpapa, Kate, my dear, in his best days), and will put your question to me in plain words, I will answer it.

[*Here the* OLD GENTLEMAN *takes off his black velvet cap, and, exhibiting a perfectly bald head, makes a long series of bows, each accompanied with a fresh kiss of the hand. After exhausting himself, to all appearance, with this fatiguing performance, he covers his head once more, pulls the cap very carefully over the tips of his ears, and resumes his former attitude.*]

O. G. The question is—[*Here he breaks off to look round in every direction, and satisfy himself beyond all doubt that there are no listeners near. Assured that there are not, he taps his nose several times, accompanying the action with a cunning look, as though congratulating himself on his caution, stretches out his neck, and speaks in a loud whisper*]—Are you a princess?

Mrs. N. [*Making a feint of retreating towards the house*] You are mocking me, sir.

O. G. No, but are you?

Mrs. N. You know I am not, sir.

O. G. [*With great anxiety*] Then are you any relation to the Archbishop of Canterbury? Or to the Pope of Rome? Or the Speaker of the House of Commons? Forgive me, if I am wrong, but I was told you were niece to the Commissioners of Paving, and daughter-in-law to the Lord Mayor and Court of Common Council, which would account for your relationship to all three.

Mrs. N. [*With some warmth*] Whoever has spread such reports, sir, has taken great liberties with my name, and one which I am sure my son Nicholas, if he was aware of it, would not allow for an instant. The idea! [*Draws herself up.*] Niece to the Commissioners of Paving!

K. [*Whispering*] Pray, mama, come away!

Mrs. N. [*Angrily*] "Pray, mama!" Nonsense, Kate. But that's just the way. If they had said I was niece to a piping bullfinch, what would you care? But I have no sympathy. [*Whimpers.*] I don't expect it, that's one thing.

O. G. [*With such an energetic jump, that he falls down two or three steps and grates his chin against the wall*] Tears! Catch the crystal globules—catch 'em—bottle 'em up—cork 'em tight—put sealing-wax on the top—seal 'em with a Cupid—label 'em "Best quality"—and stow 'em away in the fourteen binn, with a bar of iron on the top to keep the thunder off. [*Issuing these commands as if there are a dozen attendants all actively engaged in their execution, he turns his velvet cap inside out, puts it on with great dignity so as to obscure his right eye and three-fourths of his nose, and sticking his arms akimbo, looks very fiercely at nothing. He then puts his cap in his pocket with an air of great satisfaction, and addresses himself with respectful demeanour to* MRS. NICKLEBY.] Beautiful madam, if I have made any mistake with regard to your family or connexions, I humbly beseech you to pardon me. If I supposed you to be related to Foreign Powers or Native Boards, it is because you have a manner, a carriage, a dignity, which you will excuse my saying that none but yourself (with the single exception perhaps of the tragic muse, when playing extemporaneously on the barrel organ before the East India Company) can parallel. I am not a youth, ma'am, as you see; and although beings like you can never grow old, I venture to presume that we are fitted for each other.

Mrs. N. [*Faintly, and looking another way*] Really, Kate, my love!

O. G. [*Flourishing his right hand negligently, and speaking very fast*] I have estates, ma'am, jewels, light-houses, fish-ponds, a whalery of my own in the North Sea, and several oyster-beds of great profit in the Pacific Ocean. If you will have the kindness to step down to the Royal Exchange and to take the cocked hat off the stoutest beadle's head, you will find my card in the lining of the crown, wrapped up in a piece of blue paper. My walking-stick is also to be seen on application to the chaplain of the House of Commons, who is strictly forbidden to take any money for showing it. I have enemies about me, ma'am, [*looks over his shoulder, and speaks very low*] who attack me on all occasions, and wish to secure my property. If you bless me with your hand and heart, you can apply to the Lord Chancellor or call out the military if necessary—sending my toothpick to the Commander-in-Chief will be sufficient—and so clear the house of them before the ceremony is performed. After that, love, bliss and rapture; rapture, love and bliss. Be mine, be mine!

Mrs. N. Kate, my dear, I have hardly the power to speak; but it is necessary for the happiness of all parties that this matter should be set at rest for ever.

K. Surely there is no necessity for you to say one word, mama?

Mrs. N. You will allow me, my dear, if you please, to judge for myself.

O. G. Be mine, be mine!

Mrs. N. [*Fixing her eyes modestly on the ground*] It can scarcely be expected, sir, that I should tell a stranger whether I feel flattered and obliged by such proposals, or not. They certainly are made under very singular circumstances; still at the same time, as far as it goes, and to a certain extent of course, they must be gratifying and agreeable to one's feelings.

O. G. Be mine, be mine! Gog and Magog, Gog and Magog. Be mine, be mine!

Mrs. N. [*With perfect seriousness*] It will be sufficient for me to say, sir—and I'm sure you'll see the propriety of taking an answer and going away—that I have made up my mind to remain a widow, and to devote myself to my children. You may not suppose I am the mother of two

children—indeed many people have doubted it, and said that nothing on earth could ever make 'em believe it possible—but it is the case, and they are both grown up. We shall be very glad to have you for a neighbour—very glad; delighted, I'm sure—but in any other character it's quite impossible, quite. As to my being young enough to marry again, that perhaps may be so, or it may not be; but I couldn't think of it for an instant, not on any account whatever. I said I never would, and I never will. It's a very painful thing to have to reject proposals, and I would much rather that none were made; at the same time this is the answer that I determined long ago to make, and this is the answer I shall always give.

[*These observations are partly addressed to the* OLD GENTLEMAN, *partly to* KATE, *and partly delivered in soliloquy. Towards their conclusion, the suitor evinces a very irreverent degree of inattention, and* MRS. NICKLEBY *has scarcely finished speaking, when, to the great terror of both that lady and her daughter, he suddenly flings off his coat, and springing on the top of the wall, throws himself into an attitude which displays his small-clothes and grey worsteds to the fullest advantage, and concludes by standing on one leg, and repeating his favourite bellow with increased vehemence. While he is still dwelling on the last note, and embellishing it with a prolonged flourish, a dirty hand is observed to glide stealthily and swiftly along the top of the wall, as if in pursuit of a fly, and then to clasp with the utmost dexterity one of the* OLD GENTLEMAN'S *ankles. This done, the companion hand appears, and clasps the other ankle. Thus encumbered, the* OLD GENTLEMAN *lifts his legs awkwardly once or twice, as if they were very clumsy and imperfect pieces of machinery, and then, looking down on his own side of the wall, bursts into a loud laugh.*]

O. G. It's you, is it?

Voice. [*Gruffly*] Yes, it's me.

O. G. How's the Emperor of Tartary?

Voice. Oh! he's much the same as usual. No better and no worse.

O. G. [*With much interest*] The young Prince of China—is he reconciled to his father-in-law, the great potato salesman?

Voice. No; and he says he never will be, that's more.
O. G. If that's the case, perhaps I'd better come down.
Voice. Well, I think you had, perhaps.

[*One of the hands being then cautiously unclasped, the* OLD GENTLEMAN *drops into a sitting posture, and is looking round to smile and bow to* MRS. NICKLEBY, *when he disappears with some precipitation, as if his legs have been pulled from below.* MRS. NICKLEBY *and* KATE *stand watching in great astonishment.*] [*Curtain falls.*

STORMY SCENES IN THE VARDEN HOUSEHOLD

(FROM *Barnaby Rudge*)

CHARACTERS.

GABRIEL VARDEN . .	*A locksmith.*
MRS. VARDEN . .	*His wife.*
DOLLY VARDEN . .	*Their daughter.*
MIGGS	*Mrs. Varden's "domestic."*
EDWARD CHESTER . .	*A young gentleman.*
JOE WILLET . . .	*Dolly's sweetheart.*
A SMALL BOY . .	*Nephew to Miggs.*

SCENE.—*The back-parlour of Gabriel Varden's house in the suburb of Clerkenwell.*

Time: SCENE I.—8 *minutes.*
II.—8 ,,
III.—12 ,,]

Description of Characters.

GABRIEL VARDEN: A bluff, hale, hearty, red-faced and sturdy yeoman, in a green old age; at peace with himself, and evidently disposed to be so with all the world. In Scene I. he appears muffled up in divers coats and handkerchiefs—one of which is passed over his crown and tied in a convenient crease of his double chin, to secure his three-cornered hat and bob-wig. On his face are certain dirty finger-marks, which give it an odd and comical expression, through which shines its natural good-humour. In Scene II. he is without his wig and wears a leather-apron, his shirt-sleeves being turned up to the elbow, and his hands and face soiled. For his dress in Scene III. see illustration on page 59. For other illustrations see Frontispiece; also *Barnaby Rudge*, page 38: "Edward Chester Relates his Adventures."

MRS. VARDEN: A lady of "an uncertain temper," who is pretty sure to be dull when other people are merry, and is disposed to be amazingly cheerful when other people are dull. She is plump and buxom to look at, though, like her daughter, somewhat short in stature. For her dress see the illustration on page 59. She appears in the same attire in each of Scenes I. and II., and is in a very smart gown of red and white in Scene III. For other illustrations see *Barnaby Rudge*, page 173: "Mr. Chester Making an Impression," and page 265: "The Locksmith Dressing for Parade."

DOLLY VARDEN: A pretty girl, with a roguish face and sparkling eyes; dimpled, and fresh, and healthful—the very impersonation of good-humour and blooming beauty. For illustrations see Frontispiece and page 59, and also those mentioned above.

MIGGS: A tall young lady, very much addicted to pattens in private life; slender and shrewish, of a rather uncomfortable figure, and, though not absolutely ill-looking, of a sharp and acid visage. For illustrations see pages 59 and 68; also those mentioned above.

EDWARD CHESTER: A young gentleman of seven-and-twenty, with an air of careless ease and natural gracefulness of demeanour. He has long dark hair, and is dressed in the style usual for gentlemen in the eighteenth century. For illustration see *Barnaby Rudge*, page 93: "Mr. Haredale Interrupts the Lovers."

JOE WILLET: A broad-shouldered, strapping young fellow, who has lost his right arm in the wars. For his dress see illustration on page 59.

THE SMALL BOY. See illustration on page 59.

N.B.—Each of the following three Scenes is complete in itself. Scenes I. and II. may therefore be taken separately, if so desired. If Scene III. is taken, it would be well to precede it by Scene I.—leaving out Scene II. if desired.

A considerable time is supposed to elapse between the action of the first two Scenes and that of the third.

SCENE I.

RESIGNATION.

Gabriel Varden, Mrs. Varden, and Miggs.

Arrangement of Stage.

A door at each side—one the workshop door, the other leading upstairs—and a fireplace at back of stage. Over the fireplace a small looking-glass. About centre of stage a table laid for supper, prominent among the things on it being "Toby"—a large brown jug shaped into a man's face. Two or three old-fashioned chairs about, and a stool in one corner near front of stage. A clothes-peg on one of the doors. When the curtain rises, Mrs. Varden is seen reading a book —the *Protestant Manual*—by candlelight, her feet resting on the fender, while Miggs is seated on the stool looking at herself in a small looking-glass, which she carries in her pocket.

Mrs. V. My nightcap, Miggs.

[MIGGS *hastily puts away the glass, picks up the night-cap, which has been warming on the fender, and assists* MRS. VARDEN *to put it on by holding the looking-glass and candle before her. As this operation is concluded, a knock is heard at the workshop door.*]

M. [*Going to the door*] Who's there?

G. [*From outside*] Me, girl, me.

M. What, already, sir! [*Unlocks and opens the door with a look of surprise.*] We was just getting on our nightcaps to sit up—me and mistress. Oh, she has been *so* bad! [MRS. VARDEN *goes on reading unconcernedly.*] Master's come home, mim. [*Runs before him towards the fireplace.*] You was wrong, mim, and I was right. I thought he wouldn't keep us up so late, two nights running, mim. Master's always considerate—so far. I'm so glad, mim, on your account. I'm a little—[*simpers*] a little sleepy myself; I'll own it now, mim, though I said I wasn't when you asked me. It an't of no consequence, mim, of course.

[GABRIEL *meanwhile goes to his chair, opposite* MRS. VARDEN, *sits down, and looks at his wife.*]

G. [*Shortly*] Then you had better get to bed at once.

M. Thanking you kindly, sir, I couldn't take my rest in peace, nor fix my thoughts upon my prayers, otherways than that I knew mistress was comfortable in her bed this night; by rights she should have been there hours ago.

[*Goes to her stool and proceeds to put on her night-cap.*]

G. You're talkative, mistress.

[*Rises, pulls off his great-coat, hangs it up, comes back, and looks at her askew.*]

M. Taking the hint, sir, and thanking you for it most kindly, I will make bold to say that if I give offence by having consideration for my mistress, I do not ask your pardon, but am content to get myself into trouble and to be in suffering.

[MRS. VARDEN, *who has been all this time intent upon the* Protestant Manual, *here looks round.*]

Mrs. V. Thank you, Miggs, you may hold your tongue.

M. [*With alarming spitefulness*] Yes, mim, I will.

G. How do you find yourself now, my dear?

[*Places his chair near his wife* (*who has resumed her book*), *and rubs his knees hard as he makes the inquiry.*]

Mrs. V. [*With her eyes upon the book*] You're very anxious to know, an't you? You, that have not been near me all day, and wouldn't have been if I was dying!

G. My dear Martha—— [MRS. VARDEN *turns over to the next page; then goes back again to the bottom line overleaf to be quite sure of the last words; and then goes on reading with an appearance of the deepest interest and study.*] My dear Martha, how can you say such things, when you know you don't mean them? If you were dying! Why, if there was anything serious the matter with you, Martha, shouldn't I be in constant attendance upon you?

Mrs. V. Yes! [*bursts into tears*] yes, you would. I don't doubt it, Varden. Certainly you would. That's as much as to tell me that you would be hovering round me like a vulture, waiting till the breath was out of my body, that you might go and marry somebody else. [MIGGS *groans in sympathy—a little short groan, checked in its birth, and changed into a cough.*] But you'll break my heart one of these days, [*speaks with resignation*]

and then we shall both be happy. My only desire is to see Dolly comfortably settled, and when she is, you may settle *me* as soon as you like.

M. Ah! [*Coughs again.*

G. [*Mildly, after twisting his wig about in silence for some time*] Has Dolly gone to bed?

Mrs. V. [*Looking sternly over her shoulder at* MIGGS] Your master speaks to you.

G. [*Mildly, as before*] No, my dear, I spoke to you.

Mrs. V. [*Stamping her foot upon the ground*] Did you hear me, Miggs? *You* are beginning to despise me now, are you? But this is example! [*Here* MIGGS *falls a-crying violently, holding both her hands tight upon her heart meanwhile, as if nothing less would prevent its splitting into small fragments.* MRS. VARDEN *weeps too, against* MIGGS; *and with such effect that* MIGGS *gives in after a time, and, except for an occasional sob, which seems to threaten some remote intention of breaking out again, leaves her mistress in possession of the field. Her superiority being thoroughly asserted,* MRS. VARDEN *soon desists likewise, and falls into a quiet melancholy. The relief is so great that* GABRIEL *nods in his chair, but the voice of* MRS. VARDEN, *who speaks in a sort of monotonous remonstrance, awakes him with a start.*] If I am ever in spirits, if I am ever cheerful, if I am ever more than usually disposed to be talkative and comfortable, this is the way I am treated.

[*While this conversation is going on between* GABRIEL *and* MRS. VARDEN, MIGGS *is in a very restive state, constantly rubbing and tweaking her nose, changing her position, groaning, gasping and sighing.*]

M. Such spirits as you was in too, mim, but half an hour ago! I never see such company!

G. Miggs, my good girl, go to bed—do go to bed. You're really worse than the dripping of a hundred water-butts outside the window, or the scratching of as many mice behind the wainscot. I can't bear it. Do go to bed, Miggs. To oblige me—do.

M. You haven't got nothing to untie, sir, and therefore your requests does not surprise me. But missis has —and while you sit up, mim, [*turns to* MRS. VARDEN] I couldn't, no, not if twenty times the quantity of cold water was aperiently running down my back at this moment, go to bed with a quiet spirit.

[*Having spoken these words,* MIGGS *makes divers efforts to rub her shoulders in an impossible place, and shivers from head to foot.*]

Mrs. V. Because I never interfere or interrupt; because I never question where anybody comes or goes; because my whole mind and soul is bent on saving where I can save, and labouring in this house—therefore, they try me as they do. [*Sighs deeply.*

G. [*Endeavouring to look as wakeful as possible*] Martha, what is it you complain of? I really came home with every wish and desire to be happy. I did, indeed.

Mrs. V. What do I complain of! Is it a chilling thing to have one's husband sulking and falling asleep directly he comes home—to have him freezing all one's warm-heartedness, and throwing cold water over the fireside? Is it natural, when I know he went out upon a matter in which I am as much interested as anybody can be, that I should wish to know all that has happened, or that he should tell me without my begging and praying him to do it? Is that natural, or is it not?

G. I am very sorry, Martha. I was really afraid you were not disposed to talk pleasantly. I'll tell you everything; I shall only be too glad, my dear.

Mrs. V. [*Rising with dignity*] No, Varden, I dare say—thank you! I'm not a child to be corrected one minute and petted the next—I'm a little too old for that, Varden. Miggs, carry the light. *You* can be cheerful, Miggs, at least.

[MIGGS, *who, to this moment, has been in the very depths of compassionate despondency, passes instantly into the liveliest state conceivable, and tossing her head as she glances towards the locksmith, bears off her mistress and the light together.*]

G. [*Shrugging his shoulders and drawing his chair to the fire*] Now, who would think that that woman could ever be pleasant and agreeable? And yet she can be. Well, well, all of us have our faults. I'll not be hard upon hers. We have been man and wife too long for that. [*He dozes for a minute, then yawns, and speaks the next words dreamily.*] I wish—I wish somebody would marry Miggs. But that's impossible. I wonder whether there's any madman alive, who would marry Miggs!

[*Falls asleep as the curtain falls.*

SCENE II.

EXASPERATION.

Gabriel Varden, Mrs. Varden, Dolly, Miggs, and Edward Chester.

Arrangement of Stage.

As in the preceding scene, but the supper-things removed. Their place is taken by tea-things and a work-basket. Near the table sit Dolly Varden, sewing, and her mother, reading the *Protestant Manual*. As soon as the curtain rises, Miggs comes bursting in, carrying a scrubbing-brush in her hand.

M. Oh, mim, there's Mr. Edward Chester a-standing in the workshop among the rusty locks and keys, like Love among the roses.

[*On hearing this,* MRS. VARDEN *and* DOLLY *rise up and* MRS. VARDEN *goes towards the door. As she reaches it,* MR. EDWARD CHESTER *enters, closely followed by* GABRIEL, *who has on a leather-apron, and has his shirt-sleeves rolled up to the elbows. Both his arms and his face show signs of the work that he has been engaged upon. After the others have seated themselves, he also sits down on a chair near the door.*]

Mrs. V. [*Curtseying*] I'm sure you'll excuse me, sir. Varden is so very thoughtless, and needs so much reminding—Miggs, bring a chair here.

[MIGGS *obeys, and* EDWARD CHESTER *sits down.*

G. And you can go, Miggs.

[MIGGS *obeys again, and* MRS. VARDEN *pours out a cup of tea, which* EDWARD *accepts from the hands of* DOLLY.]

Mrs. V. [*Very ugreeably*] I am sure if there's anything we can do—Varden, or I, or Dolly either—to serve you, sir, at any time, you have only to say it, and it shall be done.

E. C. I am much obliged to you, I am sure. You encourage me to say that I have come here now, to beg your good offices. [MRS. VARDEN *looks delighted beyond measure.*] It occurred to me that probably your fair daughter might be going to the Warren, either to-day or to-morrow. [*Glances at* DOLLY.] And if so, and you will allow her to take charge of this letter, ma'am, [*produces a letter from his breast-pocket*] you will oblige me more than I can tell you. The truth is, that while I am very anxious it should reach its destination, I have particular reasons for not trusting it to any other conveyance; so that without your help, I am wholly at a loss.

Mrs. V. [*Graciously*] She was not going that way, sir, either to-day, or to-morrow, nor indeed all next week. But we shall be very glad to put ourselves out of the way on your account, and if you wish it, you may depend upon its going to-day. You might suppose, [*frowns at her husband*] from Varden's sitting there so glum and silent, that he objected to this arrangement; but you must not mind that, sir, if you please. It's his way at home. Out of doors, he can be cheerful and talkative enough.

G. [*Who has all the time been sitting with a beaming face, and is quite taken by surprise*] My dear Martha——

Mrs. V. [*Interrupting, and with a smile of mingled scorn and pleasantry*] Oh yes, I dare say. Very dear! We all know that.

G. No, but my good soul, you are quite mistaken. You are indeed. I was delighted to find you so kind and ready. I waited, my dear, anxiously, I assure you, to hear what you would say.

Mrs. V. You waited anxiously. Yes! Thank you, Varden. You waited, as you always do, that I might bear the blame, if any came of it. But I am used to it, and that's my comfort!

G. [*Rising*] I give you my word, Martha——

Mrs. V. [*Interposing with a Christian smile*] Let me give you *my* word, my dear, that such discussions as these between married people are much better left alone. Therefore, if you please, Varden, we'll drop the subject. I have no wish to pursue it. I could. I might say a great deal. But I would rather not. Pray don't say any more.

G. I don't want to say any more.

[*Sits down resignedly.*

Mrs. V. Well then, don't.

G. [*Good-humouredly*] Nor did I begin it, Martha. I must say that.

Mrs. V. You did not begin it, Varden! [*Opens her eyes very wide and looks round upon the company.*] You did not begin it, Varden! But you shall not say I was out of temper. No, you did not begin it, oh dear no, not you, my dear!

G. Well, well. That's settled, then.

Mrs. V. Oh yes, quite. If you like to say Dolly began it, my dear, I shall not contradict you. I know my duty. I need know it, I am sure. I am often obliged to bear it in mind, when my inclination perhaps would be for the moment to forget it. Thank you, Varden.

[*Here* MRS. VARDEN, *with a mighty show of humility and forgiveness, folds her hands, and looks round again, with the smile of a martyr. At this juncture* EDWARD CHESTER *rises to go, and* MRS. VARDEN *suddenly becomes very gracious again.*]

E. C. I am afraid I must be going, Mrs. Varden. It is very kind indeed of you and of Miss Dolly [DOLLY *curtseys*] to take so much trouble on my account. [*Shakes hands with* MRS. VARDEN *and whispers to* DOLLY.] I will call to-morrow, in case there should happen to be an answer.

[*Bows gracefully and goes out.* GABRIEL *follows, and shortly after comes back with his hands in his pockets. He fidgets about the room in a very uneasy manner, and casts a great many sidelong looks at* MRS. VARDEN, *who with the calmest countenance in the world is five fathoms deep in the* Protestant Manual.]

G. Well, Dolly, how do you mean to go?

D. I suppose by the stage-coach.

[*Looks at her mother, who, finding herself silently appealed to, dives down at least another fathom into the* Manual, *and becomes unconscious of all earthly things.*]

G. Martha——

Mrs. V. I hear you, Varden. [*Goes on reading.*

G. I am sorry, my dear, you have such an objection to the Maypole and old John, for, otherways, as it's a very fine morning, and Saturday's not a busy day with us, we might have all three gone to Chigwell in the chaise, and had quite a happy day of it.

Mrs. V. [*Immediately closing the* Manual, *and bursting into tears*] Oh! lead me upstairs.

G. [*Hopelessly*] What is the matter now, Martha?

Mrs. V. Oh! don't speak to me. If anybody had told me so, I wouldn't have believed it.

G. But, Martha, [*puts himself in the way as she is moving off with the aid of* DOLLY'S *shoulder*] wouldn't have believed what? Tell me what's wrong now. Do tell me. Upon my soul I don't know. Do *you* know, child? [*Plucks at his wig in a kind of frenzy.*] Damme! nobody does know, I verily believe, but Miggs!

Mrs. V. [*Faintly, and with symptoms of approaching incoherence*] Miggs is attached to me, and that is sufficient to draw down hatred upon her in this house. She is a comfort to me, whatever she may be to others.

G. [*Despairingly*] She's no comfort to me. She's the misery of my life. She's all the plagues of Egypt in one.

Mrs. V. She's considered so, I have no doubt. I was prepared for that; it's natural; it's of a piece with the rest. When you taunt me as you do to my face, how can I wonder that you taunt her behind her back!

[*Here, the incoherence coming on very strong,* MRS. VARDEN *weeps, and laughs, and sobs, and shivers, and is finally led away upstairs by* DOLLY. *Meanwhile* GABRIEL *stands scratching his head, with a look of despair on his face. When the two women have gone he takes his pipe out of his pocket, sits down by the fireplace, and lights it resignedly. By this time* DOLLY *returns.*]

D. [*Coming in*] Go upstairs, father, if it's only for the sake of peace and quietness.

G. Oh, Doll, Doll! If you ever have a husband of your own—— [DOLLY *glances at the glass.*] Well, *when* you have, never faint, my darling. More domestic unhappiness has come of easy fainting, Doll, than from all the greater passions put together. Remember that, my dear, if you would be really happy, which you never can be, if your husband isn't. And a word in your ear, my precious. Never have a Miggs about you!

[*Kisses her on the cheek, and slowly repairs to* MRS. VARDEN'S *room.*] [*Curtain falls.*

SCENE III.

REFORMATION.

Gabriel Varden, Mrs. Varden, Dolly, Joe Willet, Miggs, and Small Boy.

Arrangement of Stage.

As in Scenes I. and II. The table is laid for tea, the tea-kettle is on the hob, there are plenty of flowers about the room, and everybody is looking very happy. When the curtain rises, Gabriel is sitting at the table with "Toby" near his elbow. Mrs. Varden is pouring out tea, and Joe Willet and Dolly are looking at some of the flowers on a side-table. He has his arm round her waist. Mrs. Varden is speaking. The door leading to the workshop is standing ajar.

Mrs. V. Yes, my dear, I saw it from the first. I've known it all along. I said within myself—for I remember the *exact* words—"that young Willet is certainly looking after our Dolly, and *I* must look after *him*."

[*They all laugh heartily, and* JOE *and* DOLLY *cross over near to* GABRIEL.]

G. [*Slapping* JOE *on the back*] And Joe, my boy, you remember when you brought the flowers—crocuses, weren't they—for Dolly, and I told you to give them to the old lady? And then when you'd done so, you remember how she had 'em put out of the window because she couldn't bear the smell of 'em? [*Laughs heartily again, and they all join in,* MRS. VARDEN *included. At this moment a startling knock is heard from behind the stage.*] Hullo! There's some one at the street-door. [JOE *at once goes off to see who is there, and is followed closely by* DOLLY, *who pulls the door gently after her, without shutting it. There is a long pause, and the knock is repeated in a yet more startling manner.*] Is any one going to open that door? [*Laughs to his wife.*] Or shall I come? [*Upon this,* DOLLY *comes running back, blushing, and a great noise is heard from the back of the stage as of a door being shut noisily. Finally* JOE *reappears.*] Well, what is it, eh, Joe? What are you laughing at?

J. Nothing, sir. It's coming in.

G. Who's coming in? What's coming in? [*Looks at* MRS. VARDEN *inquiringly, but she only shakes her head; so he wheels his chair round to command a better view of the workshop-door, and stares at it with his eyes wide open, and with a mingled expression of curiosity and wonder. Meanwhile, remarkable sounds are heard, as though some unwieldy chest or heavy piece of furniture is being brought in by an amount of human strength inadequate to the task. At length, after much struggling and bumping the door opens, and the locksmith, steadily regarding what appears beyond, smites his thigh, opens his mouth, and speaks in a loud voice expressive of the utmost consternation.*] Damme, if it an't Miggs come back! [MIGGS *no sooner hears these words, than she deserts the* SMALL BOY *and a very large box by which she is accompanied, and advancing with such precipitation that her bonnet flies off her head, bursts into the room, clasps her hands (in which she holds a pair of pattens, one in each), raises her eyes devotedly to the ceiling, and sheds a flood of tears. Meanwhile* JOE *and* DOLLY *go off to one side and sit down on the same chair, laughing. The* SMALL BOY *sits down on the box, open-mouthed, and makes various attempts to see all there is to be seen on the table.*] The old story! [*Looks at her in desperation.*] She was born to be a damper, this young woman! Nothing can prevent it!

M. Ho, master, ho, mim! can I constrain my feelings in these here once agin united moments! Ho, Mr. Warden, here's blessedness among relations, sir, here's forgiveness of injuries, here's amicablenesses! [GABRIEL *looks from his wife to* DOLLY, *and from* DOLLY *to* JOE, *and from* JOE *to* MIGGS, *with his eyebrows still elevated and his mouth still open. When his eyes get back to* MIGGS, *they rest on her, fascinated.*] To think [*with hysterical joy*] that Mr. Joe, and dear Miss Dolly, has raly come together after all as has been said and done contrairy! To see them two a settin' along with him and her, so pleasant and in all respects so affable and mild; and me not knowing of it, and not being in the ways to make no preparations for their teas. Ho, what a cutting thing it is, and yet what sweet sensations is awoke within me! [*In clasping her hands again* MIGGS *clinks her pattens after the manner of a pair of cymbals, and*

Miggs' Short-lived Joy.

then resumes.] And did my missis think—ho goodness, did she think—as her own Miggs, which supported her under so many trials, and understood her natur' when them as intended well but acted rough went so deep into her feelings—did she think as her own Miggs would ever leave her? Did she think as Miggs, though she was but a servant, and knowed that servitudes was no inheritances, would forgit that she was the humble instruments as always made it comfortable between them two when they fell out, and always told master of the meekness and forgiveness of her blessed dispositions? Did she think as Miggs had no attachments? Did she think that wages was her only object?

[*Here* MIGGS *falls on the neck of the* SMALL BOY, *who happens at that moment to be standing up absorbed in contemplation of the things on the table. He disengages himself rudely, whereupon she uses her handkerchief freely on bursting into tears. Then she gets hold of one end of her box, gives her nephew a push, and prepares to bear her wardrobe upstairs.*]

G. [*Turning to* MRS. VARDEN] My dear, do you desire this?

Mrs. V. I desire it! I am astonished—I am amazed —at her audacity. Let her leave the house this moment.

M. [*Who here, letting one end of the box fall heavily to the floor, gives a very loud sniff, crosses her arms, and screws down the corners of her mouth*] Ho, good gracious! Ho, good gracious! Ho, good gracious!

[*These cried in an ascending scale.*

G. You hear what your mistress says, my love. You had better go, I think. Stay; take this with you, for the sake of old service.

[MIGGS *clutches the bank-note he takes from his pocket-book and holds out to her; deposits it in a small, red leather purse; puts the purse in her pocket, displaying, as she does so, a considerable portion of some under-garment, made of flannel, and more black cotton stocking than is commonly seen in public—and tosses her head as she looks at* MRS. VARDEN.]

M. Ho, good gracious!

G. I think you said that once before, my dear.

M. [*Bridling*] Times is changed, is they, mim? You

can spare me now, can you? You can keep 'em down without me? You're not in wants of any one to scold, or throw the blame upon, no longer, an't you, mim? I'm glad to find you've grown so independent. I wish you joy, I'm sure! [*With this she drops a curtsey, and keeps her head erect, her eyes on each of the company, as she alludes to them in her remarks.*] I'm quite delighted, I'm sure, to find sich independency, feeling sorry though, at the same time, mim, that you should have been forced into submission when you couldn't help yourself—he he he! It must be great vexations, 'specially considering how ill you always spoke of Mr. Joe—to have him for a son-in-law at last; and I wonder Miss Dolly can put up with him, either, after being off and on for so many years with a coachmaker. But I *have* heerd say that the coachmaker thought twice about it—he he he!—and that he told a young man as was a frind of his, that he hoped he knowed better than to be drawed into that; though she and all the family *did* pull uncommon strong! [*Pauses for a reply, and receiving none, goes on as before.*] I *have* heerd say, mim, that the illnesses of some ladies was all pretensions, and that they could faint away stone dead whenever they had the inclinations so to do. Of course I never see sich cases with my own eyes—ho no! He he he! Nor master neither—ho no! He he he! I *have* heerd the neighbours make remark as some one as they was acquainted with was a poor good-natur'd, mean-spirited creetur, as went out fishing for a wife one day, and caught a Tartar. Of course I never to my knowledge see the poor person himself. Nor did you neither, mim—ho no! I wonder who it can be—don't you, mim? No doubt you do, mim. Ho yes. He he he! [*Again pauses for a reply; and none being offered, becomes oppressed with teeming spite and spleen.*] I'm glad Miss Dolly can laugh. He he! I like to see folks a-laughing—so do you, mim, don't you? You was always glad to see people in spirits, wasn't you, mim? And you always did your best to keep 'em cheerful, didn't you, mim? Though there an't such a great deal to laugh at now either; is there, mim? It an't so much of a catch, after looking out so sharp ever since she was a little chit, and costing such a deal in dress and show, to get a poor, common soldier, with one arm, is it, mim? He he! I wouldn't have a husband with one arm, anyways. I would have two arms. I would have

two arms, if it was me, though instead of hands they'd only got hooks at the end, like our dustman! [*Here* MIGGS, *who is aggravated to madness by want of contradiction, can hold out no longer, and bursts into a storm of sobs and tears. Then she falls on the* SMALL BOY, *giving him several cuffs to emphasize her next remarks.*] And how long am I going to have to stand here to be insulted. Of course you'll take a pleasure in hearing your family reviled, won't you?

[*This causes the* SMALL BOY *to go off indignant, leaving* MIGGS *and her box to follow as best they can. By a great deal of pushing and pulling she eventually gets the box outside the door.*]

G. It's a thing to laugh at, Martha, not to care for. [*Follows his wife, who has gone to the other side of the room and has her handkerchief to her eyes.*] What does it matter? You had seen your fault before. Come! Bring up "Toby" again, my dear; Dolly shall sing us a song; and we'll be all the merrier for this interruption.

[*Curtain falls.*

HATCHING A CONSPIRACY

(FROM *Barnaby Rudge*)

CHARACTERS.

MIGGS	*The "domestic" of Mrs. Varden.*
SIMON TAPPERTIT . .	*Gabriel Varden's apprentice.*

SCENE.—*The kitchen in Gabriel Varden's house in the suburb of Clerkenwell.*

[*Time.*—15 *minutes.*]

Description of Characters.

MIGGS: see *ante*, page 48.—For special illustration see page 68.

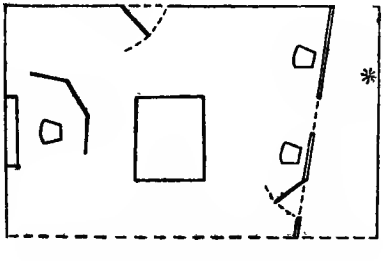
SIMON TAPPERTIT: An old-fashioned, thin-faced, sleek-haired, sharp-nosed, small-eyed little fellow, very little more than five feet high, and thoroughly convinced in his own mind that he is above the middle size. His legs are encased in knee-breeches, and are perfect curiosities of littleness, but for these he entertains the highest admiration. In years he is just twenty, in his looks much older, and in conceit at least two hundred. For illustrations see Frontispiece and page 65.

Arrangement of Stage.

This Scene is slightly more difficult to arrange than most of the others, since it requires a partition in one part of the stage from back to front. The stage on one side of this partition is arranged as a kitchen, and on the other—which should be the narrower portion of the stage—is left bare, as representing a passage or roadway. The partition must have in it a door, with

lock and key, and a window sufficiently large to admit of the entrance through it of a person's body. The partition must also be sufficiently strong to allow for this. The kitchen requires a fireplace on the side opposite to the partition, and another door at the back of the stage. The furniture should be a small kitchen-table about the middle of the stage, three chairs, a coal-pan on the side of the fireplace nearest to the front of the stage, various dishes and pan-lids on the back wall, and a large screen placed round the fireplace so as to hide it from view from both the doors and leave it open to the audience. There should be an unlighted candle on the table, and a lighted lamp suspended from the side of the passage so as to shine obliquely through the window. See the diagram below.

When the curtain rises, the kitchen is in semi-darkness. Within the screen is seen Miggs, minus her outer skirt, wearing a shawl round her shoulders, and a nightcap, and sitting with her feet on the fender. She gets up, passes round the screen to the outer door, makes sure that it is locked, and hangs the key on a nail by the side of the door. Then she returns, draws the screen round her, and resumes her former position. Presently a noise is heard as of some one turning the handle of the inner door—the one at the back of the stage.



M. [*Listening acutely and speaking to herself*] Oh! what a Providence it is as I am bolted in. [*The inner doors opens gently and a head is thrust in, followed by a*

Mr. Tappertit's Jealousy.

hand holding a lighted lantern. They suddenly disappear, however, and the door is closed just as MIGGS *is carefully glancing round the corner of the screen.*] Here's mysteries. Oh, gracious, here's mysteries! [*Pulls the screen close round the fireplace, and applies her eye closely to a hole in it facing the door. The door slowly opens again, and* SIMON TAPPERTIT *appears, walking carefully on tiptoe, carrying his shoes in one hand and a lantern in the other. He crosses over to the outer door, puts down the lantern, strikes an attitude as shown on the preceding page, takes a key out of his pocket, unlocks the door, passes outside, locks it again, puts the key in his pocket, tries the door with his knee, and goes away on tiptoe. Meanwhile* MIGGS *gently moves her eye to another hole in the screen and watches the outer door.*] Gracious! [*Comes from behind the screen.*] Goodness gracious! [*Lights the candle and looks at the lock on the outer door, then at the key which hangs near.*] Goodness gracious me! [*Takes down the key, unlocks the door, peeps out, shuts the door and locks it, replacing the key on its nail.*] Why, I wish I may only have a walking funeral, and never be buried decent with a mourning-coach and feathers, if the boy hasn't been and made a key for his own self! Oh, the little villain! [*Deliberates for some little time, looking hard at the door while she does so, as though her eyes and thoughts are both upon it; and then, taking a sheet of paper from a drawer in the table, twists it into a long thin spiral tube. Having filled this instrument with a quantity of small coal-dust from the coal-pan, she approaches the door, and dropping on one knee before it, dexterously blows into the keyhole as much of these fine ashes as the lock will hold. When she has filled it to the brim in a very workmanlike and skilful manner, she goes towards the door again, and chuckles.*] There! now let's see whether you won't be glad to take some notice of me, mister. He, he, he! You'll have eyes for somebody besides Miss Dolly now, I think. A fat-faced puss she is, as ever *I* come across! [*As she says this she puts down the piece of paper, takes out a piece of looking-glass from her pocket, holds it near the candle, and glances approvingly at herself.*] I thank my stars that can't be said of me! [*Wraps herself more closely in her shawl, draws a couple of chairs near the window, flounces down upon one, and puts her feet upon the other.*] I don't go

to bed this night till you come home, my lad! I wouldn't—[*viciously*] no, not for five-and-forty pounds! [*With this she puts out her candle, composes herself to wait and listen, and sits there, perfectly still, for some time. At length there is a footstep in the passage, and presently* SIMON TAPPERTIT *stops at the door. Then he tries his key—blows into it—knocks it on the ground to beat the dust out—pokes bits of stick into the lock to clear it—peeps into the keyhole, first with one eye, and then with the other—tries the key again—gives it a mighty twist and a great pull, and it comes out so suddenly that he staggers backwards—kicks the door—shakes it—finally, smites his forehead, and sits down in despair. When this crisis has arrived,* MIGGS, *affecting to be exhausted with terror, and to cling to the window-sill for support, calls out in a faint voice.*] Who is there?

T. Hush!

[*Backs away from the window, and exhorts her in frenzied pantomime to secrecy and silence.*]

M. Tell me one thing. Is it thieves?

T. No—no—no!

M. [*More faintly than before*] Then it's fire. Where is it, sir? It's near this room, I know. I've a good conscience, sir, and would much rather die than open the door. All I wish is, respecting my love to my married sister, Golden Lion Court, number twenty-sivin, second bell-handle on the right-hand door-post.

T. Miggs! don't you know me? Sim, you know—Sim——

M. [*Clasping her hands*] Oh! what about him! Is he in any danger? Is he in the midst of flames and blazes? Oh gracious, gracious!

T. [*Knocking himself on the breast*] Why I'm here, an't I? Don't you see me? What a fool you are, Miggs!

[*Comes close to the window and holds up his lantern.*

M. There! Why—so it—Goodness, what is the meaning of—— [*Loudly*] If you please, mim, here's——

[*Runs away from the window.*

T. [*Standing on tiptoe against the window*] No, no! Don't!—I've been out without leave, and something or another's the matter with the lock. Come and undo the window, that I may get in that way.

M. I dursn't do it, Simmun. I dursn't do it, indeed. You know as well as anybody, how particular I am.

Miggs in the Sanctity of her Chamber.

And to open the window in the dead of night, when the house is wrapped in slumbers and weiled in obscurity!

[*Stops and shivers.*

T. [*Getting still closer to the window, that she may see his eyes*] But Miggs, my darling Miggs—— [MIGGS *screams slightly.*]—That I love so much, and never can help thinking of—[*makes great use of his eyes when he says this*]—do—for my sake, do.

M. Oh, Simmun, that is worse than all. I know if I let you in, you'll go, and——

T. And what, my precious?

M. [*Hysterically*] And try to kiss me, or some such dreadfulness; I know you will!

T. [*With remarkable earnestness*] I swear I won't. Upon my soul I won't. It's getting broad day and the watchman's waking up. Angelic Miggs! If you'll only let me in, I promise you faithfully and truly I won't. [MIGGS *lights her candle and holds it up against the window. Then she draws back the fastenings. Having helped* TAPPERTIT *in, she faintly articulates the words,* "Simmun is safe!" *and faints in his arms.* TAPPERTIT *is rather embarrassed by this circumstance.*] I knew I should quench her. Of course I was certain it would come to this, but there was nothing else to be done—if I hadn't eyed her over, she wouldn't have let me in. Here! Keep up a minute, Miggs. What a slippery figure she is! There's no holding her, comfortably. Do keep up a minute, Miggs, will you?

[*As* MIGGS, *however, is deaf to all entreaties,* TAPPERTIT *leans her against the wall as one might dispose of a walking-stick or umbrella, until he has secured the window, when he takes her in his arms again, and, in short stages and with great difficulty, carries her to her chair, plants her in it, and leaves her to her repose.*]

M. [*Recovering as soon as she is left alone*] He may be as cool as he likes; but I'm in his confidence and he can't help himself, nor couldn't if he was twenty Simmunses! [*Curtain falls.*

THE STRANGER'S VISIT

(FROM *Barnaby Rudge*)

CHARACTERS.

BARNABY RUDGE . .	*An idiot youth*
MRS. RUDGE . . .	*His mother, living as a widow.*
THE STRANGER . . .	*Barnaby's father, a murderer in hiding, but supposed to have been murdered himself.*

SCENE.—*The interior of Mrs. Rudge's cottage in a by-street in Southwark.*

[*Time.*—20 *minutes.*]

Description of Characters.

BARNABY RUDGE: A youth about three-and-twenty years old, and, though rather spare, of a fair height and strong make. His hair, of which he has a great profusion, is red, and hanging in disorder about his face and shoulders. His looks are restless, and his complexion pale. His dress is green, clumsily trimmed here and there with gaudy lace; brightest where the cloth is most worn and soiled, and poorest where it is at the best. A pair of tawdry ruffles dangle at his wrists, while his throat is nearly bare. He has ornamented his hat with a cluster of peacock's feathers, but they are limp and broken, and now trail negligently down his back. Girded to his side is the steel hilt of an old sword without blade or scabbard; and some parti-coloured ends of ribands and poor glass toys complete the ornamental portion of his attire. Strapped over his shoulders is a wicker-basket containing his constant companion—Grip—the raven. See illustration on page 75.

N.B.—As this scene is arranged, the fact that there is no Grip within the basket will not matter at all. But, by Barnaby's having in his hand a small "clicker," he can imitate the bird supposed to be inside. In the case of the player who takes Barnaby's part having any powers of ventriloquism, the scene can be made very effective. Chapter XVII. of *Barnaby Rudge* should then be referred to for guidance.

MRS. RUDGE: A woman of about forty—perhaps two or three years older—with a face that has once been pretty, but which bears evident traces of affliction and care. There is a strong resemblance between the faces of Barnaby and his mother, but while his bears a look of vacancy, hers bears one of terror. She is dressed in dingy black, and has her head tied up in a black cloth, fastened under her chin. On entering, she carries a basket on her arm. See illustration on page 75.

THE STRANGER: A hard-featured man of sixty or thereabouts, dressed in torn and ragged clothes, which are saturated with wet and besmeared with mire. His complexion is of a cadaverous hue, and he has a grizzly, jagged beard of some three weeks' date. There is an ugly seam across his cheek-bone, which is partially hidden by a dark handkerchief bound tightly round his head and almost hiding his eyebrows. Above this he wears an old three-cornered hat. For illustrations see page 75, and *Barnaby Rudge*, page 4: "An Unsociable Stranger."

Arrangement of Stage.

The same as in the preceding scene—"Hatching a Conspiracy," but the window must have outside shutters (which are closed when the scene begins), and the screen is not required. The door at the back of the stage here represents the cupboard door. [See diagram on page 64.] When the curtain rises, the stage should be nearly dark. Mrs. Rudge is seen coming up the passage towards her door. Closely and silently following her is the stranger. She stops at the door, stoops to get the key from her basket, raises her head, and sees him standing silently beside her. He claps his hand over her mouth.

S. [*Speaking hoarsely, while his teeth chatter*] I have been looking for you many nights. Is the house empty? Answer me. Is any one inside? [MRS. RUDGE *answers by a rattle in her throat. He takes the key, unlocks the door, carries her in, places her in a chair, and secures the door carefully. Then, stooping down before the half-extinguished ashes, he rakes them together and fans them with his hat. From time to time he glances at her over his shoulder. Then he lights two candles and puts them on the table. She has covered her face with her hands, fearing, as it seems, to look towards him. So they remain for some short time in silence. Glancing round again, he at length speaks.*] Is this your house?

Mrs. R. It is. Why, in the name of Heaven, do you darken it?

S. [*Sullenly*] Give me meat and drink. The very marrow in my bones is cold with wet and hunger. I must have warmth and food, and I will have them here.

Mrs. R. You were the robber on the Chigwell-road.

S. I was.

Mrs. R. And nearly a murderer then.

S. The will was not wanting. There was one came upon me and raised the hue-and-cry, that it would have gone hard with, but for his nimbleness. I made a thrust at him.

Mrs. R. [*Looking upwards*] You thrust your sword at *him!*

[*He looks at her, as, with her head thrown back, and her hands tightly clenched together, she utters these words. Then, starting to his feet, he advances towards her.*]

S. Give me to eat and drink, lest I do what Heaven cannot help my doing.

Mrs. R. Will you leave me, if I do thus much? Will you leave me and return no more?

S. [*Seating himself at the table*] I will promise nothing, nothing but this—I will shoot myself dead if you betray me. [*Takes a pistol from his breast, and then replaces it.* MRS. RUDGE *goes to the door at the back of the stage, and brings forth some fragments of cold meat and bread and puts them on the table. He asks for brandy, and for water. These she produces likewise; and he eats and drinks with voracity. All the time he is so engaged she*

keeps at the uttermost distance from him, and sits there shuddering, but with her face towards him. She never turns her back upon him once; and when she passes him, as she is obliged to do in going to and from the cupboard, she gathers the skirts of her garment about her. His repast ended, he moves his chair towards the fire again, and warms himself.] I am an outcast, to whom a roof above his head is often an uncommon luxury, and the food a beggar would reject is delicate fare. You live here at your ease. Do you live alone?

Mrs. R. [*With an effort*] I do not.

S. Who dwells here besides?

Mrs. R. One—it is no matter who. You had best begone, or he may find you here. Why do you linger?

S. [*Spreading out his hands before the fire*] For warmth. For warmth. You are rich, perhaps?

Mrs. R. [*Faintly*] Very. Very rich. No doubt I am very rich.

S. At least you are not penniless. You have some money. You were making purchases to-night.

Mrs. R. I have a little left. It is but a few shillings.

S. Give me your purse. You had it in your hand at the door. Give it to me.

[*She steps to the table and lays it down. He reaches across, takes it up, and tells the contents into his hand. As he is counting them, she listens for a moment, and springs towards him. Meanwhile* BARNABY RUDGE *comes dancing along outside the cottage. As he dances, he admires his shadow, makes attempts to catch it, and goes back again as if he were chasing it. Shortly he returns.*]

Mrs. R. Take what there is, take all, but go before it is too late. I have heard a wayward step without, I know full well. It will return directly. Begone.

S. What do you mean?

Mrs. R. Do not stop to ask. I will not answer. Much as I dread to touch you, I would drag you to the door if I possessed the strength, rather than you should lose an instant. Miserable wretch! fly from this place.

S. If there are spies without, I am safer here. I will remain here, and will not fly till the danger is past.

Mrs. R. [*Listening*] It is too late! Hark to that foot upon the ground. Do you tremble to hear it! It is my son, my idiot son!

[*As she says this wildly,* BARNABY *knocks heavily at the door. The* STRANGER *looks at her, and she at him.*]

S. [*Hoarsely*] Let him come in. I fear him less than the dark, houseless night. [*He knocks again.*] Let him come in! [BARNABY *leaves the door, and rattles at the shutter.*] He rattles at the shutters! He calls you. That voice and cry! It was he who grappled with me in the road. Was it he?

[MRS. RUDGE *has sunk upon a chair, moving her lips, but uttering no sound. As he gazes upon her, uncertain what to do or where to turn, the shutters fly open. He has barely time to catch a knife from the table, sheathe it in the loose sleeve of his coat, and hide in the cupboard, when* BARNABY *taps at the glass, and opens the window exultingly.*]

B. [*Thrusting in his head, and staring round the room*] Why, who can keep out Grip and me! Are you there, mother? How long you keep us from the fire and light. [*Climbs in by the window, hugging the basket.*] We have been afield, mother—leaping ditches, scrambling through hedges, running down steep banks, up and away, and hurrying on. The wind has been blowing, and the rushes and young plants bowing and bending to it, lest it should do them harm, the cowards—and Grip—ha ha ha!—brave Grip, who cares for nothing, and when the wind rolls him over in the dust, turns manfully to bite it—Grip, bold Grip, has quarrelled with every little bowing twig—thinking, he told me, that it mocked him—and has worried it like a bull-dog. Ha ha ha! [*As* BARNABY *mentions* GRIP'S *name, he holds up the basket at arm's length and dances round and round. Then he closes the window and secures it, and coming to the fireplace, prepares to sit down with his face to the cupboard. But his mother prevents this, by hastily taking that side herself, and motioning him towards the other.*] How pale you are to-night! [*Leans on his stick and speaks to the basket.*] We have been cruel, Grip, and made her anxious! [*The* STRANGER *holds the door of his hiding-place open with his hand, and closely watches* BARNABY.] He flaps his wings [*turns almost quickly enough to catch the retreating form and closing door*] as if there were strangers here; but Grip is wiser than to fancy that. Mother! [*lays aside his hat and stick*] I'll tell you where we have been to-day, and what we have been doing,

Barnaby Greets his Mother.

—shall I? [*She takes his hand in hers, and holding it, nods an answer.*] You mustn't tell, [*holds up his finger*] for it's a secret, mind, and only known to me, and Grip, and Hugh. We had the dog with us, but he's not like Grip, clever as he is, and doesn't guess it yet, I'll wager.—Why do you look behind me so?

Mrs. R. [*Faintly*] Did I? I didn't know I did. Come nearer me.

B. You are frightened! Mother—you don't see——

Mrs. R. See what?

B. [*Speaking in a whisper, drawing closer to her and clasping a mark upon his wrist*] There's—there's none of this about, is there—blood? I am afraid there is, somewhere. You make my hair stand on end, and my flesh creep. Why do you look like that? Is it in the room as I have seen it in my dreams, dashing the ceiling and the walls with red? Tell me. Is it? [*Falls into a shivering fit as he puts the question, and shutting out the light with his hands, sits shaking in every limb until it has passed away. After a time, he raises his head and looks about him.*] Is it gone?

Mrs. R. [*Soothing him*] There has been nothing here. Nothing indeed, dear Barnaby. Look! You see there are but you and me.

[*He gazes at her vacantly, and, becoming reassured by degrees, bursts into a wild laugh.*]

B. [*Thoughtfully*] But let us see. Were we talking? Was it you and me? Where have we been?

Mrs. R. Nowhere but here.

B. Aye, but Hugh, and I—that's it. Maypole Hugh, and I, you know, and Grip—we have been lying in the forest, and among the trees by the road-side, with a dark-lantern after night came on, and the dog in a noose ready to slip him when the man came by.

Mrs. R. What man?

[*The door opens, and the* STRANGER *looks out.*

B. The robber—him that the stars winked at. We have waited for him after dark these many nights, and we shall have him. I'd know him in a thousand. Mother, see here! This is the man. Look! [*Twists his handkerchief round his head, pulls his hat upon his brow, wraps his coat about him, and stands up before her.*] Ha ha ha! We shall have him. [*Rids himself of the semblance as hastily as he assumed it.*] You shall see him, mother,

bound hand and foot, and brought to London at a saddle-girth; and you shall hear of him at Tyburn Tree if we have luck. So Hugh says. You're pale again, and trembling. And why *do* you look behind me so?

Mrs. R. It is nothing. I am not quite well. Go you to your bed, dear, and leave me here.

B. To bed! I don't like bed. I like to lie before the fire, watching the prospects in the burning coals—the rivers, hills, and dells, in the deep, red sunset, and the wild faces. I am hungry too, and Grip has eaten nothing since broad noon. Let us to supper. Grip! To supper, lad! [*Puts a piece of meat inside the basket. Then, having pressed his mother to eat, in vain, he sits down to supper. Once, during the progress of his meal, he wants more bread from the cupboard, and rises to get it. She hurriedly interposes to prevent him, and, summoning her utmost fortitude, passes into the cupboard and brings it back herself.* BARNABY *looks at her steadfastly as she sits down.*] Mother, is to-day my birthday?

Mrs. R. To-day! Don't you recollect it was but a week or so ago, and that summer, autumn, and winter have to pass before it comes again?

B. I remember that it has been so till now. But I think to-day must be my birthday too, for all that.

Mrs. R. Why?

B. I'll tell you why. I have always seen you—I didn't let you know it, but I have—on the evening of that day grow very sad. I have seen you cry when Grip and I were most glad; and look frightened with no reason; and I have touched your hand, and felt that it was cold—as it is now. Once, mother—on a birthday that was, also—Grip and I thought of this after we went upstairs to bed, and when it was midnight, striking one o'clock, we came down to your door to see if you were well. You were on your knees. I forget what it was you said. But when you rose and walked about, you looked just as you do now. I have found that out, you see, though I am silly. So I say you're wrong; and this must be my birthday—my birthday, Grip!

[*Gets up laughing madly, picks up the basket, and dances round with it. Then he puts it down again gently and stretches himself at full length on the mat before the fire with one arm round the basket. Here he gradually falls into a restless sleep.* MRS.

RUDGE *rises from her seat, and the* STRANGER *comes out from his hiding-place. At this moment* BARNABY *turns over towards the fire, his arm falls to the ground, and his head droops heavily upon it. The widow and her unwelcome visitor gaze at him and at each other for a moment, and then she motions him towards the door.*]

S. [*Whispering*] Stay. You teach your son well.

Mrs. R. I have taught him nothing that you heard to-night. Depart instantly, or I will rouse him.

S. You are free to do so. Shall I rouse him?

Mrs. R. You dare not do that.

S. I dare do anything, I have told you. He knows me well, it seems. At least I will know him. [*Advances, and bending down over the prostrate form, softly turns back the head and looks into the face. He contemplates it for a brief space, and hastily gets up.*] Observe. [*Whispers*] In him, of whose existence I was ignorant until to-night, I have you in my power. Be careful how you use me. Be careful how you use me. I am destitute and starving, and a wanderer upon the earth. I may take a sure and slow revenge.

Mrs. R. There is some dreadful meaning in your words. I do not fathom it.

S. There is a meaning in them, and I leave you to digest it. Do not forget my warning.

[*Points, as he leaves her, to the slumbering form, and stealthily withdraws.* MRS. RUDGE *falls on her knees beside the sleeper, and the curtain falls.*]

THE GREAT PROTESTANT ASSOCIATION

(FROM *Barnaby Rudge*)

CHARACTERS.

LORD GEORGE GORDON .	*A religious fanatic. (President of the Great Protestant Association.)*
GASHFORD . .	*His secretary.*
DENNIS . . .	*The hangman.*
HUGH . . .	*An hostler at the Maypole Inn, who has run away from his master.*

SCENE.—*Gashford's room in the house of Lord George Gordon.*

[*Time.*—30 *minutes.*]

Description of Characters.

LORD GEORGE GORDON: A nobleman of quaint and odd exterior. He is of about the middle height, and of a slender make, stiff, lank and solemn. He has a sallow complexion, a thin and melancholy-looking face, an aquiline nose, and long hair of a reddish-brown, combed perfectly straight and smooth about his ears, and slightly powdered, but without the faintest vestige of a curl. He is dressed in a black velvet coat, and trousers and waistcoat of the Gordon plaid, all of the same Quaker cut. He carries about with him a great gold-headed cane, which he sometimes holds upright before his face like the sabre of a horse-soldier, but always in some uncouth and awkward fashion. For illustration see *Barnaby Rudge*, page 306: "Barnaby is Enrolled."

GASHFORD: Taller than his master, angularly made, high-shouldered, bony and ungraceful. He has an overhanging brow, great hands and feet and ears, and very low-sunk eyes. His dress is black, and cut in the fashion of his master's. His manner is smooth and humble, but very sly and slinking. He wears the aspect of a man who is always lying in wait for something that will not come to pass; but he looks patient—very patient, and he fawns like a spaniel dog. See illustration, page 89, and also *Barnaby Rudge*, as above.

DENNIS: A squat, thick-set man with low, retreating forehead, a coarse, shock head of hair, broken nose, and eyes very close together. He wears about his neck a dingy handkerchief twisted like a cord, which leaves its great veins exposed to view. His dress is of threadbare velveteen—a faded, rusty, whitened black. In lieu of buckles at his knees, he wears unequal loops of packthread. He wears, also, a three-cornered hat, and carries in his grimy hands a knotted stick, the knob of which is carved into a rough likeness of his own face. See illustrations on pages 89 and 91.

HUGH: A young man of a hale, athletic figure, and a giant's strength, with sunburnt face and swarthy throat overgrown with jet-black hair. He is loosely attired in the coarsest and roughest garb, with scraps of hay and straw—his usual bed—clinging and mingling with his uncombed locks. There is something fierce and sullen in his features, and he carries about with him a thick, rough-cut stick. For illustrations see as above.

SCENE I.

EVENING.

Arrangement of Stage.

A table about centre of stage. On it a thick cloth, a writing-desk, lighted candles, and several books. Various papers on the desk. An inkstand with quill pens in it close by. A chair before the desk. Near the fireplace, which should be on one side and opposite the door, is a large arm-chair. There should be

somewhere a window, made to open. When the curtain rises, Lord George Gordon is seen lying back in the arm-chair, with his feet before the fire. He rises sufficiently to stir the fire, then sinks listlessly back in the chair. At this moment Gashford enters.

G. [*Speaking softly, as he peeps in at the door*] Hush! He seems to be asleep. Pray Heaven he is! Too much watching, too much care, too much thought—ah! He is a saint, if ever saint drew breath on this bad earth. [*Placing his light upon the table, he walks on tiptoe towards the fire, and stands beside* LORD GEORGE.] The saviour of his country and his country's religion, the friend of his poor countrymen, the enemy of the proud and harsh; beloved of the rejected and oppressed, adored by forty thousand bold and loyal English hearts—what happy slumbers his should be!

[*Sighs, and warms his hands; then sighs again.*

L. G. [*Who has been staring at him all the time*] Why, Gashford?

G. [*Starting and looking round as though in great surprise*] My—my lord, I have disturbed you!

L. G. I have not been sleeping.

G. [*With assumed confusion*] Not sleeping! What can I say for having in your presence given utterance to thoughts—but they were sincere—they were sincere! [*Draws his sleeve in a hasty way across his eyes.*] And why should I regret your having heard them?

L. G. [*Stretching out his hand with manifest emotion*] Gashford, do not regret it. You love me well, I know—too well. I don't deserve such homage. [GASHFORD *makes no reply, but grasps the hand and presses it to his lips. Then rising, and going to his desk, he unlocks it with a key he carries in his pocket, sits down before it, takes out a pen, and, before dipping it in the inkstand, sucks it.*] How do our numbers stand since last enrolling-night? Are we really forty thousand strong, or do we still speak in round numbers when we take the Association at that amount?

G. [*Casting his eyes upon his papers*] Our total now exceeds that number by a score and three.

L. G. The funds?

G. Not *very* improving; but there is some manna in the

wilderness, my lord. Hem! On Friday night the widows' mites dropped in. "Forty scavengers, three and fourpence. An aged pew-opener of St. Martin's parish, sixpence. A bell-ringer of the Established Church, sixpence. A Protestant infant, newly born, one halfpenny. The United Link Boys, three shillings—one bad. The Anti-popish prisoners in Newgate, five and fourpence. A friend in Bedlam, half-a-crown. Dennis the hangman, one shilling."

L. G. That Dennis is an earnest man. I marked him in the crowd in Welbeck Street, last Friday.

G. A good man—a staunch, sincere, and truly zealous man.

L. G. He should be encouraged. Make a note of Dennis. I'll talk with him.

[GASHFORD *obeys, and goes on reading from his list.*

G. "The Friends of Reason, half-a-guinea. The Friends of Liberty, half-a-guinea. The Friends of Peace, half-a-guinea. The Friends of Charity, half-a-guinea. The Friends of Mercy, half-a-guinea. The Associated Rememberers of Bloody Mary, half-a-guinea. The United Bull-Dogs, half-a-guinea."

L. G. [*Biting his nails*] The United Bull-Dogs are a new society, are they not?

G. Formerly the 'Prentice Knights, my lord. The indentures of the old members expiring by degrees, they changed their name, it seems, though they still have 'prentices among them, as well as workmen.

L. G. What is their president's name?

G. [*Reading*] "President, Mr. Simon Tappertit."

L. G. I remember him. The little man, who sometimes brings an elderly sister to our meetings, and sometimes another female too, who is conscientious, I have no doubt, but not well-favoured?

G. The very same, my lord.

L. G. [*Thoughtfully*] Tappertit is an earnest man. Eh, Gashford?

G. One of the foremost among them all, my lord. He snuffs the battle from afar, like the war-horse. He throws his hat up in the street as if he were inspired, and makes most stirring speeches from the shoulders of his friends.

L. G. Make a note of Tappertit. We may advance him to a place of trust.

G. [*Doing as he is told*] That is all—except Mrs. Varden's box (fourteenth time of opening), seven shillings and sixpence in silver and copper, and half-a-guinea in gold; and Miggs (being the saving of a quarter's wages), one-and-threepence.

L. G. Miggs! Is that a man?

G. The name is entered on the list as a woman. I think she is the tall spare female of whom you spoke just now, my lord, as not being well-favoured, who sometimes comes to hear the speeches—along with Tappertit and Mrs. Varden.

L. G. Mrs. Varden is the elderly lady then, is she? [GASHFORD *nods, and rubs the bridge of his nose with the feather of his pen.*] She is a zealous sister. Her collection goes on prosperously, and is pursued with fervour. Has her husband joined?

G. [*Folding up his papers*] A malignant—unworthy such a wife. He remains in outer darkness, and steadily refuses.

L. G. The consequences be upon his own head!—Gashford!

G. My lord! [*Rises and goes over to the fireplace.*

L. G. You don't think [*turns restlessly in his chair as he speaks*] these people will desert me, when the hour arrives? I have spoken boldly for them, ventured much, suppressed nothing. They'll not fall off, will they?

G. No fear of that, my lord. Be sure there is no fear of that.

L. G. [*Turning with a more restless motion than before*] Nor of their—but they *can* sustain no harm from leaguing for this purpose. Right is on our side, though Might may be against us. You feel as sure of that as I—honestly, you do?

G. You do not doubt——

L. G. [*Interrupting impatiently*] Doubt? No. Who says I doubt? If I doubted, should I cast away relatives, friends, everything, for this unhappy country's sake—this unhappy country——

[*Springs up, after repeating the phrase* "unhappy country's sake" *to himself, several times, then sinks down wearily into the chair, where his head nods forward gradually, and he goes to sleep. Meanwhile* GASHFORD *goes over to the desk, takes out some handbills, and slowly reads, by the light*

of one of the candles, the following words from one of them.]

G. "To every Protestant into whose hands this shall come! Men and Brethren. Whoever shall find this letter will take it as a warning to join, without delay, the friends of Lord George Gordon. There are great events at hand; and the times are dangerous and troubled. Read this carefully, keep it clean, and drop it somewhere else. For King and Country. Union." [*He now crosses over to the window, opens it, and drops out two of the handbills. Having closed the window again, he comes back to centre of room.*] More seed, more seed! When will the harvest come? [*Goes over to the fireplace, and whispers in his master's ear.*] My lord, my lord!

L. G. [*Waking up startled*] Yes—who's that? What is it?

G. [*Standing with meekly-folded hands*] The clock has struck eleven. You have been asleep.

L. G. [*Rubbing his eyes and looking round the room*] To say the truth, I have slept so soundly that I don't remember quite—what place is this?

G. [*With a smile*] My lord!

L. G. Oh! Yes. You're not a Jew, then?

G. [*Recoiling*] A Jew!

L. G. I dreamed that we were Jews, Gashford. You and I—both of us—Jews with long beards.

G. Heaven forbid, my lord! We might as well be Papists.

L. G. [*Very quickly*] I suppose we might, eh? You really think so, Gashford?

G. [*With looks of great surprise*] Surely I do.

L. G. Humph! Yes, that seems reasonable.

G. I hope, my lord——

L. G. [*Interrupting*] Hope! Why do you say you hope? There's no harm in thinking of such things.

G. Not in dreams.

L. G. In dreams! No, nor waking either.

[*As these words are uttered,* LORD GEORGE, *who has been going on impetuously, stops short, and is silent.*]

G. The holy cause goes bravely on, my lord. I have not been idle, even to-night. I have dropped two of the handbills, and both will be gone in the morning. One or two recruits will be their first fruit, I predict; and who

shall say how many more, with Heaven's blessing on your inspired exertions!

L. G. [*Getting up from the chair*] It was a famous device in the beginning, an excellent device, and did good service in Scotland. It was quite worthy of you. You remind me not to be a sluggard, Gashford, when the vineyard is menaced with destruction, and may be trodden down by Papist feet. Let us go to bed, Gashford.

[GASHFORD *hands his master his cane, and opens the door for him.* LORD GEORGE *walks slowly out, holding up his cane.*]

G. [*Thoughtfully, as he closes the door after his master*] Dreamed he was a Jew! He may come to that before he dies. It's like enough. Well! After a time, and provided I lost nothing by it, I don't see why that religion shouldn't suit me as well as any other. There are rich men among the Jews; shaving is very troublesome—yes, it would suit me well enough. For the present, though, we must be Christians to the core.

[*Is locking the desk as the curtain falls.*

SCENE II.

THE FOLLOWING MORNING.

Arrangement of Stage.

As in the preceding scene, but the candles are removed. When the curtain rises Gashford is seen sitting at his desk, sorting papers. The door opens slightly.

Voice outside. Here's a visitor, sir.

G. Let him come in, John.

Voice outside. [*Growling*] Here! Come in! You're a Protestant, an't you?

D. [*Outside*] *I* should think so.

[*Spoken in a deep, gruff voice.*

Voice outside. You've the looks of it. I'd have known you for one, anywhere.

[DENNIS *comes in and the door is closed.*

G. Ah! Dennis! Sit down.

D. I see my lord down yonder, [*jerks his thumb towards one side*] and he says to me, says my lord, "If you've

nothing to do, Dennis, go up to my house and talk with Muster Gashford." Of course I'd nothing to do, you know. They wan't my working hours. Ha, ha! I was a-taking the air when I see my lord, that's what I was doing. I takes the air by night, as the howls does, Muster Gashford.

G. And sometimes in the day-time, eh?—when you go out in state, you know.

D. [*Smiting his leg and roaring with laughter*] Ha, ha! for a gentleman as 'ull say a pleasant thing in a pleasant way, give me Muster Gashford agin' all London and Westminster! My lord an't a bad 'un at that, but he's a fool to you. Ah, to be sure,—when I go out in state.

G. And have your carriage, and your chaplain, eh? And all the rest of it?

D. [*With another roar*] You'll be the death of me, you will. But what's in the wind now, Muster Gashford? [*Hoarsely*] Eh? Are we to be under orders to pull down one of them Popish chapels—or what? [*Sits down here.*

G. [*Suffering the faintest smile to play upon his face*] Hush! hush! God bless me, Dennis! We associate, you know, for strictly peaceable and lawful purposes.

D. [*Thrusting his tongue into his cheek*] *I* know, bless you! I entered a' purpose, didn't I?

G. [*Smiling as before*] No doubt.

[*When he says this,* DENNIS *roars again, smites his leg still harder, falls into fits of laughter, and wipes his eyes with the corner of his neckerchief.*

D. Muster Gashford agin' all England—hollow!

G. [*After a pause*] Lord George and I were talking of you last night. He says you are a very earnest fellow.

D. So I am.

G. And that you truly hate the Papists.

D. So I do, curse 'em. Lookye here, Muster Gashford. [*Lays his hat and stick upon the floor, and slowly beats the palm of one hand with the fingers of the other.*] Observe. I'm a constitutional officer that works for my living, and does my work creditable. Do I, or do I not?

G. Unquestionably.

D. Very good. Stop a minute. My work is sound, Protestant, constitutional, English work. Is it, or is it not?

G. No man alive can doubt it.

D. Nor dead neither. Parliament says this here—says Parliament, "If any man, woman, or child, does anything which goes agin' a certain number of our acts"—how many hanging laws may there be at this present time, Muster Gashford? Fifty?

G. [*Leaning back in his chair and yawning*] I don't exactly how many. A great number, though.

D. Well, say fifty. Parliament says, "If any man, woman, or child, does anything agin' any one of them fifty acts, that man, woman, or child, shall be worked off by Dennis." George the Third steps in when they number very strong at the end of a sessions, and says, "These are too many for Dennis. I'll have half for *my*self, and Dennis shall have half for *him*self"; and sometimes he throws me in one over that I don't expect, as he did three year ago, when I got Mary Jones, a young woman of nineteen who come up to Tyburn, and was worked off for taking a piece of cloth off the counter of a shop in Ludgate Hill, and putting it down again when the shopman see her. Ha, ha!—Well! That being the law and the practice of England is the glory of England, an't it, Muster Gashford?

G. Certainly.

D. And in times to come, if our grandsons should think of their grandfathers' times, and find these things altered, they'll say, "Those were days indeed, and we've been going down hill ever since."—Won't they, Muster Gashford?

G. I have no doubt they will.

D. Well then, look here. If these Papists gets into power and begins to boil and roast instead of hang, what becomes of my work! If they touch my work that's a part of so many laws, what becomes of the laws in general, what becomes of the religion, what becomes of the country!—Did you ever go to church, Muster Gashford?

G. [*With some indignation*] Ever! of course.

D. Well, I've been once—twice, counting the time I was christened—and when I heard the Parliament prayed for, and thought how many new hanging laws they made every sessions, I considered that *I* was prayed for. Now mind, Muster Gashford, [*takes up his stick and shakes it with a ferocious air*] I mustn't have my Protestant work touched, nor this here Protestant state of things altered in no degree, if I can help it; I mustn't have no Papists

interfering with me, unless they come to me to be worked off in course of law; I mustn't have no biling, no roasting, no frying—nothing but hanging. My lord may well call me an earnest fellow. In support of the great Protestant principle of having plenty of that, I'll [*here he beats his club upon the ground*] burn, fight, kill—do anything you bid me, so that it's bold and devilish—though the end of it was, that I got hung myself.—There, Muster Gashford.

[*Wipes his heated face upon his neckerchief.*

G. [*Leaning back in his chair, and speaking slowly and distinctly*] You are indeed an earnest fellow, Dennis—a most valuable fellow—the staunchest man I know of in our ranks. But you must calm yourself; you must be peaceful, lawful, mild as any lamb. I am sure you will be, though.

D. [*Shaking his head*] Ay, ay, we shall see, Muster Gashford, we shall see. You won't have to complain of me.

G. I am sure I shall not. You will be cool, I know, obedient to orders, and perfectly temperate. You will lead your party into no danger, I am certain.

D. [*Recklessly*] I'll lead them, Muster Gashford——

[*Here* GASHFORD *starts forward, lays his finger on his lips, and feigns to write, just as the door is opened. Voice outside.* Here's another Protestant.

G. [*In a bland voice*] Some other room, John, I am engaged just now. [*But* HUGH *walks in unbidden, as the words are uttered.*] Ay, ay, I recollect. It's quite right, John, you needn't wait. Don't go, Dennis.

H. Your servant, master. [*Stands very ill at ease.*

G. [*In the smoothest manner*] Yours, friend. What brings *you* here? We left nothing behind us, I hope?

[HUGH *gives a short laugh, and thrusting his hand into his breast, produces one of the handbills, soiled and dirty, which he lays upon* GASHFORD'S *desk after flattening it upon his knee, and smoothing out the wrinkles with his heavy palm.*]

H. Nothing but that, master. It fell into good hands, you see.

G. What is this? [*Turns it over with an air of perfectly natural surprise.*] Where did you get it from, my good fellow; what does it mean? I don't understand this at all.

[*A little disconcerted by this reception,* HUGH *looks from* GASHFORD *to* DENNIS, *who has risen and is standing at the table too, observing* HUGH *by*

Another "Protestant."

stealth, and seeming to derive the utmost satisfaction from his manner and appearance. Considering himself silently appealed to by this action, DENNIS *shakes his head thrice.*]

D. [*Aside*] No. He don't know anything at all about it. I know he don't. I'll take my oath he don't.

[*Hides his profile from* HUGH *with one long end of his frowsy neckerchief, and nods and chuckles behind this screen in extreme approval of* GASHFORD'S *proceedings.*]

H. It tells the man that finds it to come here, don't it? I'm no scholar, myself, but I showed it to a friend, and he said it did.

G. It certainly does. Really this is the most remarkable circumstance I have ever known. How did you come by this piece of paper, my good friend?

D. [*Aside*] Muster Gashford, agin' all Newgate!

H. [*Hearing him, and seeing by his manner that he is being played upon*] Here! [*stretches out his hand and takes it back*] never mind the bill, or what it says, or what it don't say. You don't know anything about it, master,—no more do I—no more does he [*glances at* DENNIS]. None of us know what it means, or where it comes from; there's an end of that. Now I want to make one against the Catholics, I'm a No-Popery man, and ready to be sworn in. That's what I've come here for.

D. [*Approvingly*] Put him down on the roll, Muster Gashford. That's the way to go to work—right to the end at once, and no palaver.

H. What's the use of shooting wide of the mark, eh, old boy?

D. My sentiments all over! This is the sort of chap for my division, Muster Gashford. Down with him, sir. Put him on the roll. I'd stand godfather to him, if he was to be christened in a bonfire, made of the ruins of the Bank of England. [*Here* DENNIS *gives him a hearty slap on the back, which* HUGH *is not slow to return.*] No Popery, brother!

H. No Property, brother!

G. [*Mildly*] Popery, Popery.

D. It's all the same! It's all right. Down with him, Muster Gashford. Down with everybody, down with everything! Hurrah for the Protestant religion! That's the time of day, Muster Gashford! [*Takes hold of*

A No-Popery Dance.

HUGH'S *hand and dances about with him clumsily.* GASHFORD *regards them both with a very favourable expression of countenance, and is about to make some remark, when* DENNIS, *stepping up to him, and shading his mouth with his hand, nudges him with his elbow.*] Don't split upon a constitutional officer's profession, Muster Gashford. There are popular prejudices, you know, and he mightn't like it. Wait till he comes to be more intimate with me. He's a fine-built chap, an't he?

[*Says this in a hoarse whisper.*

G. A powerful fellow indeed!

D. [*Whispering, with admiration*] Did you ever, Muster Gashford—did you ever—[*here he draws still closer to his ear, and fences his mouth with both his open hands*] —see such a throat as his? Do but cast your eye upon it. There's a neck for stretching, Muster Gashford!

[*Curtain falls as they start dancing again.*

MR. PECKSNIFF'S PLEASANT FAMILY PARTY

(FROM *Martin Chuzzlewit*)

CHARACTERS.

MR. PECKSNIFF	*An architect and land-surveyor.*
CHARITY PECKSNIFF	*His daughters.*
MERCY PECKSNIFF	
MR. SPOTTLETOE	*Relatives of Mr. Pecksniff, each of whom has designs on the property of old Mr. Martin Chuzzlewit.*
MRS. SPOTTLETOE	
MR. ANTHONY CHUZZLEWIT	
MR. GEORGE CHUZZLEWIT	
MRS. CHUZZLEWIT	
MISS CHUZZLEWIT	

SCENE.—*A room in Mr. Pecksniff's house near Salisbury.*

[*Time.*—18 *minutes.*]

Description of Characters.

MR. PECKSNIFF: A moral man, and a most exemplary man—fuller of virtuous precept than a copy-book. His very throat is moral. It looks over a very low fence of white cravat, and there it lies, a valley between two jutting heights of collar, serene and whiskerless. It seems to say, "There is no deception, ladies and gentlemen; all is peace; a holy calm pervades me." So does his hair, just grizzled with an iron-grey, which is all brushed off his forehead, and stands bolt upright. So does his person, which is sleek, though free from corpulency. So does his manner, which is soft and oily; and his plain black suit and dangling double eyeglass all tend to the same purpose. For illustration see page 97, and see also *Martin Chuzzlewit*, page 15: "Meekness of Mr. Pecksniff and his Charming Daughters," and page 130: "Truth Prevails and Virtue is Triumphant."

CHARITY PECKSNIFF: The elder of Mr. Pecksniff's two daughters. For illustrations see as above.

MERCY PECKSNIFF: A creature all girlishness, and wildness, and kittenish buoyancy. She wears her hair in a loosely flowing crop, which has so many rows of curls in it that the top row is only one curl. Her shape is moderately buxom, and she even wears a pinafore. See illustrations, as above.

MR. SPOTTLETOE: A man so bald and with such big whiskers that he seems to have stopped his hair in the very act of falling off his head, and to have fastened it irrevocably on his face. See illustration, page 97.

MRS. SPOTTLETOE: A lady much too slim for her years, and of a poetical constitution. She can, by reason of her strong affection for her uncle, Chuzzlewit, do nothing but cry—except moan. See illustration, as above.

MR. ANTHONY CHUZZLEWIT: An old miser, whose face has been so sharpened by the wariness and cunning of his life that it seems to cut him a passage through the crowded room, as he edges away behind the remotest chairs. See illustration, as above.

MR. GEORGE CHUZZLEWIT: A gay bachelor, who claims to be young, and is inclined to corpulency, to the extent that his eyes are strained in their sockets, as if with constant surprise. He has such an obvious disposition to pimples, that the bright spots on his cravat, the rich pattern on his waistcoat, and even his glittering trinkets, seem to have broken out upon him. See illustration, as above.

MRS. CHUZZLEWIT: A widow, who, being almost supernaturally disagreeable, and having a dreary face and a long figure and a masculine voice, is, in right of these qualities, what is commonly called a strong-minded woman. See illustration, as above.

MISS CHUZZLEWIT: The eldest daughter of the above lady. She is of gentlemanly deportment, and has so mortified herself with tight stays that her temper is reduced to something less than her waist, and sharp-lacing is expressed in her very nose. See illustration, as above.

Arrangement of Stage.

This scene is very easy to arrange. All that will be required are a table covered with a cloth, and nine chairs. For the general arrangement of the scene consult the illustration on page 97, which—it must be noticed—shows six more characters than are here introduced.

When the curtain rises, all the characters are on the stage except Mr. Anthony Chuzzlewit, Mrs. Chuzzlewit and Miss Chuzzlewit. Mr. Pecksniff is standing in the attitude shown—but near to the door—and the others are seated as shown. Mr. Pecksniff is smiling very benignly at the company already assembled, of whom Mr. Spottletoe is glaring at Mr. George Chuzzlewit, who is engaged in winking at Charity and Mercy Pecksniff, while they in turn are sitting looking into distance with their noses scornfully elevated. Mrs. Spottletoe is weeping into her handkerchief. Mr. Anthony Chuzzlewit enters, and Mr. Pecksniff effusively seizes his hand and shakes it; but Anthony pulls it away and slips round behind the chairs and the table to the corner opposite the door. His entry is followed by that of Mrs. and Miss Chuzzlewit, the mother preceding. As they enter, Mr. Pecksniff makes an elaborate bow, but they tilt up their noses, ignore both him and his daughters, and march to the vacant chairs, where they sit down and turn their backs on the company generally by facing the audience. So they remain until the moment when they join in attacking Mr. Spottletoe. When all are seated, Mr. Pecksniff takes his stand behind the table and looks round upon them, with folded hands.

Mr. P. This does me good. It does my daughters good. We thank you for assembling here. We are grateful to you with our whole hearts. It is a blessed distinction that you have conferred upon us, and believe me [*smiles very serenely*] we shall not easily forget it.

Mr. S. [*Rising angrily*] I am sorry to interrupt you, Pecksniff, but you are assuming too much to yourself, sir. Who do you imagine has it in contemplation to confer a distinction upon you, sir? [*A general murmur echoes this inquiry, and applauds it.*] If you are about to

pursue the course with which you have begun, sir, [*gets up in a great heat, and gives a violent rap on the table with his knuckles*] the sooner you desist, and this assembly separates, the better. I am no stranger, sir, to your preposterous desire to be regarded as the head of this family, but I can tell *you*, sir——

Mrs. C. and *Miss C.* [*To the company generally*] Oh yes, indeed. *He* tell. *He!* What? He is the head, is he?

[MR. SPOTTLETOE, *after vainly attempting to be heard in silence, is fain to sit down again, folding his arms and shaking his head most wrathfully.*]

Mr. S. [*To* MRS. S.] That scoundrel Pecksniff may go on for the present, but I will cut in presently, and annihilate him.

Mr. P. I am not sorry, I am really not sorry that this little incident has happened. It is good to feel that we are met here without disguise. It is good to know that we have no reserve before each other, but are appearing freely in our own characters.

Miss C. [*Speaking to the company generally, rising a little way from her seat, and trembling violently from head to foot, more, as it seems, with passion than timidity*] All I do hope is that some people *would* appear in their own characters, if it were only for such a proceeding having the attraction of novelty to recommend it; and that when they talk about their relations, they would be careful to observe who was present in company at the time; otherwise it might come round to those relations' ears, in a way they little expect. And as to red noses, I have yet to learn that a red nose is any disgrace, inasmuch as people neither make nor colour their own noses, but have that feature provided for them without being first consulted; though even upon that branch of the subject I have great doubts whether certain noses are redder than other noses, or indeed half as red as some.

Charity. [*With much politeness*] May I ask to be informed whether any of those very low observations were levelled at me?

Miss C. Those the cap fits, let them wear it.

[*Here she sits down sharply and turns her back on the* MISS PECKSNIFFS. CHARITY *and* MERCY *begin at once to laugh scornfully—*MERCY *laughing far more naturally than life.* MRS. CHUZZLEWIT *then rises*

A Little Family Party at Mr. Pecksniff's.

and begins to make inaudible remarks to MRS. SPOTTLETOE, *who immediately falls to weeping afresh. At this* MR. SPOTTLETOE *rises, holds his clenched fist close to* MR. PECKSNIFF'S *eyes, and tells* MRS. SPOTTLETOE *in dumb show that they will go.* MR. GEORGE CHUZZLEWIT *politely rises to open the door for them, and* MR. SPOTTLETOE *takes his wife under his arm.*]

Mr. S. [*Speaking to* MR. G. C. *and shaking his fist at* MR. P.] As for you, sir, I would kick you, sir, for sixpence. [*Goes off, slamming the door violently after him.*

[MR. PECKSNIFF *now resumes, and the two* MISS PECKSNIFFS *compose themselves to look as if there were no such beings present as* MRS. *and* MISS CHUZZLEWIT; *while these become equally unconscious of the existence of the two* MISS PECKSNIFFS.]

Mr. P. It is to be lamented that our friend should have withdrawn himself so very hastily, though we have cause for mutual congratulation even in that, since we are assured that he is not distrustful of us in regard to anything we may say or do while he is absent. Now that is very soothing, is it not?

Mr. A. C. [*Who has been watching the whole party with peculiar keenness from the first*] Pecksniff, don't you be a hypocrite.

Mr. P. A what, my good sir?

Mr. A. C. A hypocrite.

Mr. P. Charity, my dear, when I take my chamber candlestick to-night, remind me to be more than usually particular in praying for Mr. Anthony Chuzzlewit; who has done me an injustice. [*This is said in a very bland voice, and aside, as being addressed to his daughter's private ear.*] All our thoughts centring in our very dear but unkind relative, and he being as it were beyond our reach, we are met to-day, really as if we were a funeral party, except—a blessed exception—that there is no Body in the house.

Mrs. C. I am not at all sure that that is a blessed exception. Quite the contrary.

Mr. P. Well, my dear madam! Be that as it may, here we are; and being here, we are to consider whether it is possible by any justifiable means——

Mrs. C. Why, you know as well as I that any means are justifiable in such a case, don't you?

Mr. P. Very good, my dear madam, very good—whether it is possible by *any* means, we will say by *any* means, to open the eyes of our valued relative to his present infatuation. Whether it is possible to make him acquainted by any means with the real character and purpose of that young female whose strange, whose very strange position, in reference to himself, [*sinks his voice to an impressive whisper*] really casts a shadow of disgrace and shame upon this family; and who, we know—[*raises his voice again*] else why is she his companion—harbours the very basest designs upon his weakness and his property.

[*Here the others join in, and find themselves for once in agreement.*]

Mrs. C. She should be poisoned, the shameless hussy.

Mr. G. C. [*Smiling*] Or sent to Botany Bay.

Charity and *Mercy*. Or flogged.

[*They laugh scornfully.*

Mr. P. [*Crossing his two fore-fingers in a manner which is at once conciliatory and argumentative*] Now, I will not, upon the one hand, go so far as to say that she deserves all the inflictions which have been so very forcibly and hilariously suggested; nor will I, upon the other, on any account compromise my common understanding as a man, by making the assertion that she does not. What I would observe is, that I think some practical means might be devised of inducing our respected, shall I say our revered——?

Mrs. C. [*Interposing in a loud voice*] No!

Mr. P. Then I will not. You are quite right, my dear madam, and I appreciate and thank you for your discriminating objection—our respected relative to dispose himself to listen to the promptings of nature, and not to the——

Mercy. Go on, Pa!

Mr. P. [*Smiling upon his assembled kindred*] Why, the truth is, my dear, that I am at a loss for a word. The name of those fabulous animals—pagan, I regret to say—who used to sing in the water, has quite escaped me.

Mr. G. C. Swans.

Mr. P. No. Not swans. Very like swans, too. Thank you.

Miss C. Oysters.

Mr. P. [*With urbanity*] No, nor oysters. But by no means unlike oysters. A very excellent idea; thank you,

my dear young lady, very much. Wait! Sirens. Dear me! sirens, of course. I think, I say, that means might be devised of disposing our respected relative to listen to the promptings of nature, and not to the siren-like delusions of art. Now we must not lose sight of the fact that our esteemed friend has a grandson, to whom he was, until lately, very much attached, and whom I could have wished to see here to-day, for I have a real and deep regard for him. A fine young man—a very fine young man! I would submit to you, whether we might not remove Mr. Chuzzlewit's distrust of us, and vindicate our own disinterestedness by——

Mrs. C. [*Interposing sternly*] If Mr. George Chuzzlewit has anything to say to *me*, I beg him to speak out like a man; and not to look at me and my daughter as if he could eat us.

Mr. G. C. [*Angrily*] As to looking, I have heard it said, Mrs. Ned, that a cat is free to contemplate a monarch; and therefore I hope I have some right, having been born a member of this family, to look at a person who only came into it by marriage. As to eating, I beg to say, whatever bitterness your jealousies and disappointed expectations may suggest to you, that I am not a cannibal, ma'am.

Mrs. C. I don't know that!

Mr. G. C. At all events, if I was a cannibal, I think it would occur to me that a lady who had outlived three husbands, and suffered so very little from their loss, must be most uncommonly tough. [MRS. CHUZZLEWIT *immediately rises.*] And I will further add, [*nods his head violently at every second syllable*] naming no names, and therefore hurting nobody but those whose consciences tell them they are alluded to, that I think it would be much more decent and becoming, if those who hooked and crooked themselves into this family by getting on the blind side of some of its members before marriage, and manslaughtering them afterwards by crowing over them to that strong pitch that they were glad to die, would refrain from acting the part of vultures in regard to other members of this family who are living. I think it would be fully as well, if not better, if those individuals would keep at home, contenting themselves with what they have got—luckily for them—already; instead of hovering about, and thrusting their fingers into a family pie, which they

flavour much more than enough, I can tell them, when they are fifty miles away.

Mrs. C. [*Looking about her with a disdainful smile as she moves towards the door, followed by her daughter*] I might have been prepared for this! Indeed I was fully prepared for it from the first. What else could I expect in such an atmosphere as this?

Charity. [*Interposing*] Don't direct your half-pay-officer's gaze at me, ma'am, if you please, for I won't bear it. [*This remark tells immensely on the company.*

Mrs. C. I passed from the memory of a grateful country, you very miserable minx, when I entered this family; and I feel now, though I did not feel then, that it served me right, and that I lost my claim upon the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland when I so degraded myself. [*To her daughter*] Now, my dear, if you're quite ready, and have sufficiently improved yourself by taking to heart the genteel example of these two young ladies, I think we'll go. Mr. Pecksniff, we are very much obliged to you, really. We came to be entertained, and you have far surpassed our utmost expectations, in the amusement you have provided for us. Thank you. Good-bye!

[*With these departing words, she sweeps out of the room, attended by her daughter, each elevating her nose in the air, and joining in a contemptuous titter. Before* MR. PECKSNIFF *or any of his remaining visitors can offer a remark,* MR. SPOTTLETOE *bursts into the chamber in a state of heat, his face violently inflamed, his limbs trembling; and he gasps and strives for breath.*]

Mr. P. My good sir!

Mr. S. Oh, yes! Oh, yes, certainly! Oh, to be sure! Oh, of course! You hear him? You hear him, all of you?

Mr. G. C. What's the matter?

Mr. S. [*Still gasping*] Oh, nothing! Nothing at all! It's of no consequence! Ask him! *He'll* tell you!

[*Points derisively to* MR. P.

Mr. P. [*Looking about him in utter amazement*] I do not understand our friend. I assure you that he is quite unintelligible to me.

Mr. S. Unintelligible, sir! Unintelligible! Do you mean to say, sir, that you don't know what has happened?

That you haven't decoyed us here, and laid a plot and a plan against us? Will you venture to say that you didn't know old Mr. Chuzzlewit was going, sir, and that you don't know he's gone, sir?

All. Gone!

Mr. S. Gone. Gone while we were sitting here. Gone. Nobody knows where he's gone. Oh, of course not! Nobody knew he was going. Oh, of course not! The landlady thought up to the very last moment that they were merely going for a ride; she had no other suspicion. Oh, of course not! She's not this fellow's creature. Oh, of course not!

[*Adding to these exclamations a kind of ironical howl, and gazing upon the company for one brief instant afterwards, in a sudden silence,* MR. SPOTTLETOE *starts off again, and is followed by the others, each of whom tries to be first out of the room. Several chairs are knocked over in the scuffle, the table-cloth is pulled off, and the curtain falls.*]

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING

(FROM *Martin Chuzzlewit*)

CHARACTERS.

MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT .	. *A young gentleman who is "hard up."*
MONTAGUE TIGG .	. *An undesirable acquaintance of Martin Chuzzlewit.*

A SHOPMAN.

SCENE.—*The "house of a mutual relation."*

[*Time.*—10 *minutes.*]

Description of Characters.

MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT: A young gentleman—one-and-twenty perhaps—and handsome. He appears in this Play closely muffled up in a great-coat, and has his hat pulled down as far as possible over his eyes. See illustration on page 106.

MONTAGUE TIGG: A very dirty, very jaunty, and very swaggering gentleman with a shaggy moustache, in the fierce and scornful style, and a vast quantity of unbrushed hair. He is of that order of appearance which is currently termed shabby-genteel. His fingers are a long way out of his gloves, and the soles of his feet are at an inconvenient distance from the upper leather of his boots. His nether garments are of a bluish grey, and are so stretched and strained in a tough conflict between his braces and his straps, that they appear every moment in danger of flying asunder at the knees. His coat, in colour blue and of a military cut, is buttoned and frogged up to his chin. His cravat is, in hue and pattern, like one of those mantles which hairdressers are accustomed to wrap about their clients, during the

progress of the professional mysteries. His hat has arrived at such a pass that it would be hard to determine whether it was originally white or black. See illustration on page 106.

A SHOPMAN: See illustration, as above.

Arrangement of Stage.

For this sketch an arrangement is needed similar to that described in "Hatching a Conspiracy" and "The Stranger's Visit" (see pages 63–4). The larger portion of the stage is made to look like a pawnbroker's shop. Along the back and along the side containing the door should run a counter at some distance from the walls. Behind the back portion of the counter should be constructed two closets as shown in the illustration on page 106. Prominently displayed in the shop should be a notice—MONEY LENT—and there should be various bundles and scattered articles lying about. The smaller portion of the stage is to represent an alley as in the other sketches, and projecting from the corner should be the pawnbroker's sign.

When the curtain rises, the shopman should be seated on his stool, as shown in the illustration, while Montague Tigg occupies the closet farthest from the door. He is engaged in undoing a parcel. Martin Chuzzlewit is seen coming up the entry. He stops at the door, takes a hasty glance round in both directions, opens the door quickly, and passes in, making for the first of the closets, which he enters. As he enters it, Montague Tigg passes the contents of his bundle over the counter to the shopman.

S. Two shillings.

T. Upon my life and soul! you must make it more—you must make it a trifle more, you must indeed! You must dispense with one half-quarter of an ounce in weighing out your pound of flesh, my best of friends, and make it two-and-six.

[MARTIN *draws back involuntarily, for he knows the voice at once.*]

S. [*Rolling up the article* (*which looks like a shirt*) *quite as a matter of course, and nibbing his pen upon the counter*] You're always full of your chaff.

T. I shall never be full of my wheat as long as I come here. Ha, ha! Not bad! Make it two-and-six, my dear friend, positively for this occasion only. Half-a-crown is a delightful coin. Two-and-six. Going at two-and-six! For the last time at two-and-six!

S. It'll never be the last time till it's quite worn out. It's grown yellow in the service as it is.

T. Its master has grown yellow in the service, if you mean that, my friend—in the patriotic service of an ungrateful country. You are making it two-and-six, I think?

S. I'm making it what it always has been—two shillings. Same name as usual, I suppose?

T. Still the same name, my claim to the dormant peerage not being yet established by the House of Lords.

S. The old address?

T. Not at all. I have removed my town establishment from thirty-eight Mayfair, to number fifteen-hundred-and forty-two, Park Lane.

S. [*With a grin*] Come, I'm not going to put down that, you know.

T. You may put down what you please, my friend. The fact is still the same. The apartments for the under-butler and the fifth footman being of a most confounded low and vulgar kind at thirty-eight, Mayfair, I have been compelled, in my regard for the feelings which do them so much honour, to take on lease for seven, fourteen, or twenty-one years, renewable at the option of the tenant, the elegant and commodious family mansion, number fifteen-hundred-and-forty-two, Park Lane. Make it two-and-six, and come and see me! [*The* SHOPMAN *is so highly entertained by this piece of humour, that* MR. TIGG *himself cannot repress some little show of exultation. It vents itself, in part, in a desire to see how the occupant of the next box receives his pleasantry; to ascertain which he glances round the partition, and immediately recognizes* MARTIN. *Thereupon he stretches out his body so far that his head is as much in* MARTIN'S *little cell as* MARTIN'S *own head is.*] I wish I may die, but this is one of the most tremendous meetings in Ancient or Modern History! How are you? What is the news from the agricultural districts? How are our friends the P.'s? Ha, ha! David, pay particular attention to this gentleman immediately, as a friend of mine, I beg.

Martin Meets an Acquaintance at the House of a Mutual Relation.

M. C. [*Handing his watch to the* SHOPMAN] Here! Please to give me the most you can for this. I want money sorely.

T. [*With excessive sympathy*] He wants money, sorely! David, will you have the goodness to do your very utmost for my friend, who wants money sorely. You will deal with my friend as if he were myself. A gold hunting-watch, David, engine-turned, capped and jewelled in four holes, escape movement, horizontal lever, and warranted to perform correctly, upon my personal reputation, who have observed it narrowly for many years, under the most trying circumstances. [*Here he winks at* MARTIN.] What do you say, David, to my friend? Be very particular to deserve my custom and recommendation, David.

S. [*To* MARTIN, *confidentially*] I can lend you three pounds on this, if you like. It is very old-fashioned. I couldn't say more.

T. And devilish handsome, too. Two-and-six for the watch, and seven-and-six for personal regard. I am gratified—it may be weakness, but I am. Three pounds will do. We take it. The name of my friend is Smivey—Chicken Smivey, of Holborn, twenty-six-and-a-half B; lodger. [*Here he winks at* MARTIN *again.* MARTIN *gives a nod of the head to the* SHOPMAN, *who makes out a ticket and pays over the money.* MARTIN *puts this in his pocket and goes out. He is joined in the shop by* MR. TIGG, *who takes his arm and accompanies him outside.*] As for my part in the same, don't mention it. Don't compliment me, for I can't bear it!

M. C. [*Releasing his arm and stopping*] I have no such intention, I assure you.

T. You oblige me very much. Thank you.

M. C. [*Biting his lip*] Now, sir, this is a large town, and we can easily find different ways in it. If you will show me which is your way, I will take another. [MR. TIGG *is about to speak, but* MARTIN *interposes.*] I need scarcely tell you, after what you have just seen, that I have nothing to bestow upon your friend Mr. Slyme. And it is quite as unnecessary for me to tell you that I don't desire the honour of your company.

T. [*Holding out his hand*] Stop! Hold! There is a most remarkably long-headed, flowing-bearded, and patriarchal proverb, which observes that it is the duty of a man to be just before he is generous. Be just now, and

you can be generous presently. Do not confuse me with the man Slyme. Do not distinguish the man Slyme as a friend of mine, for he is no such thing. I have been compelled, sir, to abandon the party whom you call Slyme. I have no knowledge of the party whom you call Slyme. I am, sir, [*strikes himself upon the breast*] a premium tulip, of a very different growth and cultivation from the cabbage Slyme, sir.

M. C. [*Coolly*] It matters very little to me whether you have set up as a vagabond on your own account, or are still trading on behalf of Mr. Slyme. I wish to hold no correspondence with you. In the devil's name, man, [*he is scarcely able, despite his vexation, to repress a smile, as* MR. TIGG *stands leaning his back against the wall, adjusting his hair with great composure*] will you go one way or other?

T. [*With sudden dignity*] You will allow me to remind you, sir, that you—not I—that you—I say emphatically, *you*—have reduced the proceedings of this evening to a cold and distant matter of business, when I was disposed to place them on a friendly footing. It being made a matter of business, sir, I beg to say that I expect a trifle—which I shall bestow in charity—as commission upon the pecuniary advance in which I have rendered you my humble services. After the terms in which you have addressed me, sir, you will not insult me, if you please, by offering more than half-a-crown.

[MARTIN *draws that piece of money from his pocket, and tosses it towards him.* MR. TIGG *catches it, looks at it to assure himself of its goodness, spins it in the air and buttons it up. Finally, he raises his hat an inch or two from his head with a military air, and, after pausing a moment with deep gravity, as to decide in which direction he shall go, sticks his hands in his skirt-pockets and swaggers off.* MARTIN *stands looking after him.*]

[*Curtain falls.*

A DIVISION BETWEEN FRIENDS

(FROM *Martin Chuzzlewit*)

CHARACTERS.

SAIREY GAMP . .	} *Professional nurses.*
BETSEY PRIG . .	
MR. SWEEDLEPIPE . .	*A barber and bird-fancier.*

SCENE.—*Mrs. Gamp's apartment over the bird-fancier's shop in Kingsgate Street, High Holborn.*

[*Time.*—25 *minutes.*]

Description of Characters.

SAIREY GAMP: A fat old woman with a husky voice and a moist eye, which she has a remarkable power of turning up, and only showing the white of it. Having very little neck, it costs her some trouble to look over herself, if one may say so, at those to whom she talks. She wears a very rusty black gown, rather the worse for snuff, and a shawl and bonnet to correspond. Her face—the nose in particular—is somewhat red and swollen, and she carries about with her a smell of spirits. Her usual paraphernalia include a pair of pattens, and a species of gig umbrella; the latter article in colour like a faded leaf, except where a circular patch of a lively blue has been dexterously let in at the top. For her appearance see illustration on page 115.

BETSEY PRIGG: A woman of the Gamp build but not so fat, and her voice is deeper and more like a man's. She has also a beard. She and Sairey Gamp are used to nursing together, turn and turn about, one off, one on. See illustration on page 115.

MR. SWEEDLEPIPE: A little elderly man with something of the bird in his nature. In his walk he struts; and,

in this respect, he bears a faint resemblance to the pigeon, as well as in a certain prosiness of speech, which may, in its monotony, be likened to the cooing of that bird. He has a very small, shrill, treble voice and a tender heart. In his part-occupation as a barber he wears an apron not over-clean, a flannel jacket, and corduroy knee-shorts. He is bald-headed, and wears a wig of curly black ringlets, parted on one side, and cut away almost to the crown, to indicate immense capacity of intellect. See the illustration to *Martin Chuzzlewit,* page 373 : "Easy Shaving."

Arrangement of Stage.

To be strictly true to the text of Dickens' *Martin Chuzzlewit*, the most prominent "property" in this scene should be Mrs. Gamp's tent bedstead; but it is proposed here to do without that article of furniture. The "properties" that will be required are two round mahogany tables, one large and one small; two large and broad-backed, old-fashioned, mahogany elbow-chairs; a collection of bandboxes, each having a carefully closed lid, but not one among them having a bottom; a small chest of drawers, from which the handles have been removed; a small cupboard by the fireplace; a small almanac, suspended over the fireplace; and by it three profiles : one, in colours, of Mrs. Gamp herself in early life; one, in bronze, of a lady in feathers, supposed to be Mrs. Harris, as she appeared when dressed for a ball; and one, in black, of Mr. Gamp, deceased. The last is a full length, in order that the likeness may be rendered more obvious and forcible by the introduction of his wooden leg. A pair of bellows, a pair of pattens, a toasting-fork, a kettle, a pap-boat, a spoon for the administration of medicine to the refractory, and lastly, Mrs. Gamp's umbrella, which, as something of great price and rarity, is displayed with particular ostentation, complete the decorations of the chimney-piece and adjacent wall. Hanging from nails are two rusty gowns and other articles of Mrs. Gamp's wardrobe, which have, by long usage, so adapted themselves to her figure that, on a hasty glance, each conveys the impression that Mrs. Gamp has hanged herself.

When the curtain rises, Mrs. Gamp is about to lay the cloth on the larger of the two tables, which should be placed on the side of the stage farthest from the fireplace. First she takes a pinch of snuff, then goes to the chest of drawers to get out the table-cloth. To open these, she tilts the whole structure forwards and shakes it well. As this has no effect, she gets a table-knife from the cupboard and opens a drawer with it. This done, the cloth is laid, and adorned with a new loaf, a plate of butter, a basin of fine white sugar, two plates, cups and saucers, a dish containing pickled salmon, and knives and forks. These preparations complete, Mrs. Gamp raises her eyes in satisfaction towards the decorations of the chimney-piece, and takes another pinch of snuff. At this moment a little bell is heard ringing outside the door—which has been standing ajar.

S. G. [*Hurrying to the door and looking out*] There's the little bell a-ringing now. Betsey Prig, my—why it's that there disapintin' Sweedlepipes, I do believe.

[*Comes back, closely followed by* MR. SWEEDLEPIPE.

Mr. S. [*In a faint voice*] Yes, it's me. I've just come in.

S. G. [*To herself*] You're always a-comin' in, I think, except wen you're a-goin' out. [*Aside*] I ha'n't no patience with the man!

Mr. S. Mrs. Gamp! I say, Mrs. Gamp!

S. G. [*Impatiently, as she sits down in her chair*] Well, what is it? Is the Thames a-fire, and cooking its own fish, Mr. Sweedlepipes? [*Looks at* MR. S. *for the first time.*] Why wot's the man gone and been a-doin' of to himself? He's as white as chalk!

Mr. S. [*Falling into the other chair*] You recollect—you recollect young——

S. G. Not young Wilkins! Don't say young Wilkins, wotever you do. If young Wilkins's wife is took——

Mr. S. [*Interrupting*] It isn't anybody's wife. Bailey, young Bailey!

S. G. [*Sharply*] Why, wot do you mean to say that chit's been a'doin' of? Stuff and nonsense, Mr. Sweedlepipes!

Mr. S. [*Quite desperate*] He hasn't been a-doing anything! What do you catch me up so short for, when you

see me put out to that extent that I can hardly speak? He'll never do anything again. He's done for. He's killed. The first time I ever see that boy, I charged him too much for a red-poll. I asked him three-halfpence for a penny one, because I was afraid he'd beat me down. But he didn't. And now he's dead; and if you was to crowd all the steam-engines and electric fluids that ever was into my shop, and set 'em every one to work their hardest, they couldn't square the account, though it's only a ha'penny! [MR. SWEEDLEPIPE *turns aside to wipe his eyes.* MRS. GAMP *takes a pinch of snuff.*] And what a clever boy he was! What a surprising young chap he was! How he talked! And what a deal he know'd! Shaved in my very chair he was. Only for fun—it was all his fun; he was full of it. Ah! to think that he'll never be shaved in earnest!

S. G. How did you ever come to hear it? Who told you?

Mr. S. I went out into the City, to meet a sporting gent upon the Stock Exchange, that wanted a few slow pigeons to practise at; and when I'd done with him, I went to get a little drop of beer, and there I heard everybody a-talking about it. It's in the papers.

S. G. [*Shaking her head*] You are in a nice state of confugion, Mr. Sweedlepipes, you are; and my opinion is, as half-a-dudgeon fresh young lively leeches on your temples wouldn't be too much to clear your mind, which so I tell you. Wot were they a-talkin' on, and wot was in the papers?

Mr. S. All about it! What else do you suppose? Him and his master were upset on a journey, and he was carried to Salisbury, and was breathing his last when the account came away. He never spoke afterwards. Not a single word. That's the worst of it to me. Ah, what a life Young Bailey's was!

S. G. [*With philosophical coolness*] He was born into a wale, and he lived in a wale; and he must take the consequences of sech a sitiwation. [*Takes more snuff.*

[*At this juncture the bell rings again, and the deep voice of* MRS. PRIG *strikes into the conversation, as she enters.*]

B. P. Oh! You're a-talkin' about it, are you? Well, I hope you've got it over, for I ain't interested in it myself.

S. G. [*Getting off her chair*] My precious Betsey, how late you are! [MR. SWEEDLEPIPE *gently removes himself.*

B. P. Well, all I can say is that if perwerse people go off dead, when they is least expected, it ain't no fault of mine. It's quite aggrawation enough to be made late when one is dropping for one's tea, without hearing on it again. [*As she says this she turns to look at the large table.*] There ! I know'd she wouldn't have a cowcumber !

S. G. [*Changing colour, and sitting down again*] Lord bless you, Betsey Prig, your words is true. I quite forgot it.

[MRS. PRIG, *looking steadfastly at her friend, puts her hand in her pocket, and with an air of surly triumph draws forth either the oldest of lettuces or youngest of cabbages, but at any rate, a green vegetable of an expansive nature, and of such magnificent proportions that she is obliged to shut it up like an umbrella before she can pull it out. She also produces a handful of mustard and cress, a trifle of the herb called dandelion, three bunches of radishes, an onion rather larger than an average turnip, three substantial slices of beetroot, and a short prong of celery. These she hands over to* MRS. GAMP.]

B. P. Now, my dear, you can slice them up, for immediate consumption, in plenty of vinegar. And don't go a-dropping none of your snuff in it. In gruel, barley-water, apple-tea, mutton-broth, and that, it don't signify. It stimilates a patient. But I don't relish it myself.

S. G. [*Laying down the snuff*] Why, Betsey Prig, how *can* you talk so !

B. P. Why, ain't your patients, wotever their diseases is, always a-sneezin' their wery heads off, along of your snuff? [*Sits down by the fireplace.*

S. G. And wot if they are?

B. P. Nothing if they are. But don't deny it, Sairah.

S. G. Who deniges of it? [MRS. PRIG *returns no answer.*] WHO deniges of it, Betsey? Betsey, who deniges of it?

B. P. Nobody, if you don't, Sairah.

[*She prepares herself for tea by "chucking" her bonnet and shawl upon the floor, and giving her hair two pulls, one upon the right side and one upon the left, as if she were ringing a couple of bells. Then she sits down again. Meanwhile* MRS. GAMP *takes from the top shelf of the cupboard a teapot and two*

wine-glasses, places these on the small table near the fireplace, and sits down facing MRS. PRIG.]

S. G. [*Filling her own glass, and passing the teapot*] Betsey, I will now propoge a toast. My frequent pardner, Betsey Prig!

B. P. Which, altering the name to Sairah Gamp, I drink with love and tenderness. [*Fills her glass and drinks.*] Now, Sairah, joining business with pleasure, wot is this case in which you wants me? [MRS. GAMP *makes no reply.*] *Is* it Mrs. Harris?

S. G. No, Betsey Prig, it ain't.

B. P. [*With a short laugh*] Well, I'm glad of that, at any rate.

S. G. [*Warmly*] Why should you be glad of that, Betsey? She is unbeknown to you except by hearsay; why should you be glad? If you have anythink to say contrairy to the character of Mrs. Harris, which well I knows behind her back, afore her face, or anywheres, is not to be impeaged, out with it, Betsey. I have know'd that sweetest and best of women, [*shakes her head, and sheds tears*] ever since afore her First, which Mr. Harris who was dreadful timid went and stopped his ears in a empty dog-kennel, and never took his hands away or come out once till he was showed the baby, wen bein' took with fits, the doctor collared him and laid him on his back upon the airy stones, and she was told to ease her mind, his owls was organs. And I have know'd her, Betsey Prig, when he has hurt her feelin' art by sayin' of his Ninth that it was one too many, if not two, while that dear innocent was cooin' in his face, which thrive it did though bandy, but I have never know'd as you had occagion to be glad, Betsey, on accounts of Mrs. Harris not requiring you. Require she never will, depend upon it, for her constant words in sickness is, and will be, "Send for Sairey!"

[*During this touching address,* MRS. PRIG, *adroitly feigning to be the victim of absence of mind, helps herself from the teapot without appearing to observe* it. MRS. GAMP *observes it, however, and comes to a premature close in consequence.*]

B. P. [*Coldly*] Well, it ain't her, it seems; who is it, then?

S. G. [*After glancing in an expressive and marked manner at the teapot*] You have heerd me mention, Betsey, a person as I took care on at the time as you and

Mrs. Gamp Propoges a Toast.

me was pardners off and on, in that there fever at the Bull?

B. P. Old Snuffey? [MRS. GAMP *looks at her angrily.*

S. G. [*Politely but firmly*] Chuffey. [MRS. PRIG *receives the correction with a diabolical laugh, while her countenance becomes derisive and defiant, and she sits with her arms folded, and one eye shut up.*] Mr. Chuffey, Betsey, is weak in his mind. Excuge me if I makes remark, that he may neither be so weak as people thinks, nor people may not think he is so weak as they pretends, and what I knows, I knows; and what you don't, you don't; so do not ask me, Betsey. But Mr. Chuffey's friends has made propojals for his bein' took care on, and has said to me, "Mrs. Gamp, *will* you undertake it? We couldn't think," they says, "of trusting him to nobody but you, for, Sairey, you are gold as has passed the furnage. Will you undertake it, at your own price, day and night, and by your own self?" "No," I says, "I will not. Do not reckon on it. There is," I says, "but one creetur in the world as I would undertake on sech terms, and her name is Harris. But," I says, "I am acquainted with a friend, whose name is Betsey Prig, that I can recommend, and will assist me. Betsey," I says, "is always to be trusted, under me, and will be guided as I could desire." [*Here* MRS. PRIG *again counterfeits abstraction of mind, and stretches out her hand to the teapot. It is more than* MRS. GAMP *can bear. She stops the hand of* MRS. PRIG *with her own, and speaks with great feeling.*] No, Betsey! Drink fair, wotever you do! [MRS. PRIG, *thus baffled, throws herself back in her chair, and closing the same eye more emphatically, and folding her arms tighter, suffers her head to roll slowly from side to side, while she surveys her friend with a contemptuous smile.*] Mrs. Harris, Betsey——

B. P. Bother Mrs. Harris! [MRS. GAMP *looks at her with amazement; while* MRS. PRIG *shuts her eye still closer, and folds her arms still tighter.*] I don't believe there's no sich a person!

[*After the utterance of these expressions, she leans forward, and snaps her fingers once, twice, thrice, each time nearer to the face of* MRS. GAMP; *and then rises to put on her bonnet. The shock of this blow is so violent and sudden, that* MRS. GAMP *sits staring at nothing with uplifted eyes, and her*

mouth open as if she is gasping for breath, until MRS. PRIG *has put on her bonnet and her shawl, and is gathering the latter about her throat. Then* MRS. GAMP *rises and denounces her.*]

S. G. What! you bage creetur. Have I know'd Mrs. Harris five and thirty year, to be told at last that there ain't no sech a person livin'? Have I stood her friend in all her troubles, great and small, for it to come at last to sech a end as this, which her own sweet picter hanging up afore you all the time, to shame your Bragian words? But well you mayn't believe there's no sech a creetur, for she wouldn't demean herself to look at you, and often has she said, when I have made mention of your name, which, to my sinful sorrow, I have done, "What, Sairey Gamp! debage yourself to *her!*" Go along with you!

B. P. [*Stopping as she speaks*] I'm a-goin', ma'am, ain't I?

S. G. You had better, ma'am.

B. P. Do you know who you're talking to, ma'am?

S. G. [*Surveying her with scorn from head to foot*] Aperiently to Betsey Prig. Aperiently so. *I* know her. No one better. Go along with you!

B. P. [*Surveying* MRS. GAMP *from head to foot in her turn*] And *you* was a-goin' to take me under you! *You* was, was you? Oh, how kind! [*With a rapid change from banter to ferocity.*] Why, deuce take your imperence, what do you mean?

S. G. Go along with you! I blush for you.

B. P. You had better blush a little for yourself, while you *are* about it! You and your Chuffeys! What! the poor old creetur isn't mad enough, isn't he? Aha!

S. G. He'd very soon be mad enough, if you had anything to do with him.

B. P. [*Triumphantly*] And that's what I was wanted for, is it? Yes. But you'll find yourself deceived. I won't go near him. We shall see how you get on without me. I won't have nothing to do with him.

S. G. You never spoke a truer word than that! Go along with you! [*Here* MR. SWEEDLEPIPE *again enters.*

Mr. S. Why, bless my life! what's amiss? The noise you ladies have been making, Mrs. Gamp! Why, two gentlemen have been standing on the stairs, outside the door, nearly all the time, trying to make you hear, while you were pelting away, hammer and tongs! It'll be the

death of the little bullfinch in the shop, that draws his own water. In his fright, he's been a-straining himself all to bits, drawing more water than he could drink in a twelvemonth. He must have thought it was Fire!

[MRS. PRIG *goes, looking round scornfully at* MRS. GAMP, *who has in the meanwhile sunk into her chair, where she turns up her overflowing eyes, and clasps her hands.*]

S. G. Oh, Mr. Sweedlepipes, wot I have took from Betsey Prig this blessed night, no mortial creetur knows! If she had abuged me, bein' in liquor, which I thought I smelt her wen she come, but could not so believe, not bein' used myself, I could have bore it with a thankful art. But the words she spoke of Mrs. Harris, lambs could not forgive. No, Betsey! nor worms forget!

[MR. SWEEDLEPIPE *scratches his head, shakes it, looks at the teapot, and gradually gets out of the room.* MRS. GAMP *drops asleep in her chair, and the curtain falls.*]

THE FRIENDLY WAITER

(FROM *David Copperfield*)

CHARACTERS.

DAVID COPPERFIELD . .	*A small boy.*
WILLIAM . . .	*A waiter.*

SCENE.—*The Coffee-room of an inn at Yarmouth.*

[*Time.*—12 *minutes.*]

Description of Characters.

DAVID COPPERFIELD: See illustration on page 121.

WILLIAM: A twinkling-eyed, pimple-faced man with his hair standing upright all over his head. See illustration, as above.

Arrangement of Stage.

A table near the centre, spread with a white cloth, on which are placed knives, forks and spoons, and a set of castors. Two or three chairs standing about, one near the door. Various maps, auction-bills, etc., hang on the walls. When the curtain rises, a woman's voice is heard from behind the stage, the door standing open.

Voice. Is that the little gentleman from Blunderstone?

D. Yes, ma'am.

Voice. What name?

D. Copperfield, ma'am.

Voice. That won't do. Nobody's dinner is paid for here, in that name.

D. Is it Murdstone, ma'am?

Voice. If you're Master Murdstone, why do you go and give another name, first? William! Show the coffee-room.

[*Here* WILLIAM *comes bustling in, a serviette over his left arm.* D. *follows, looking very nervous and bashful. When* WILLIAM *gets to the table he turns round to* D. *and feigns astonishment when he sees him.* D. *sits down, with his cap in his hand, on the corner of the chair nearest the door; and* WILLIAM *brings in a dish of four chops, another of potatoes, and a jug of ale, takes the covers off, and puts a chair for* D. *at the table.*]

W. [*Very affably*] Now, six-foot! come on! [D. *takes his seat at the table; but finds it extremely difficult to handle his knife and fork with anything like dexterity, while* WILLIAM *stands opposite, staring hard.*] There's half a pint of ale for you. Will you have it now?

D. Yes, if you please.

[WILLIAM *pours it out of a jug into a large tumbler, holds it up against the light, and makes it look beautiful.*]

W. My eye! It seems a good deal, don't it?

D. [*With a smile*] It does seem a good deal.

W. [*Looking very friendly*] There was a gentleman here yesterday—a stout gentleman, by the name of Top-sawyer—perhaps you know him?

D. No. I don't think——

W. In breeches and gaiters, broad-brimmed hat, grey coat, speckled choker.

D. [*Bashfully*] No. I haven't the pleasure——

W. [*Looking at the light through the tumbler*] He came in here, ordered a glass of this ale—*would* order it—I told him not—drank it, and fell dead. It was too old for him. It oughtn't to be drawn; that's the fact.

D. [*Much shocked*] I think I had better have some water.

W. [*Still looking at the light through the tumbler, with one of his eyes shut up*] Why, you see, our people don't like things being ordered and left. It offends 'em. But *I'll* drink it, if you like. I'm used to it, and use is everything. I don't think it'll hurt me, if I throw my head back, and take it off quick. Shall I?

The Friendly Waiter.

D. You will much oblige me by drinking it, if you think you can do it safely, but by no means otherwise.

[WILLIAM *throws his head back, and drinks it quickly, while* D. *looks on frightened. He pats himself with a satisfactory* "Ah."]

W. [*Putting a fork into the dish*] What have we got here? Not chops?

D. Chops.

W. Lord bless my soul! I didn't know they were chops. Why a chop's the very thing to take off the bad effects of that beer! Ain't it lucky? [*Takes a chop by the bone in one hand, and a potato in the other, and eats away with a very good appetite, to* D.*'s extreme satisfaction. He afterwards takes another chop, and another potato; and after that another chop and another potato. When he has done, he brings in a pudding, and having set it before* D., *seems to ruminate, and to become absent in his mind for some moments. At length he rouses himself.*] How's the pie?

D. It's a pudding.

W. Pudding! Why, bless me, so it is! What! [*Looks at it nearer.*] You don't mean to say it's a batter-pudding?

D. Yes, it is indeed.

W. [*Taking up a table-spoon*] Why, a batter-pudding is my favourite pudding! Ain't that lucky? Come on, little 'un, and let's see who'll get most.

[WILLIAM *certainly gets most. He entreats* D. *more than once to come in and win, but what with his table-spoon to* D.*'s tea-spoon, his dispatch to* D.*'s dispatch, and his appetite to* D.*'s appetite,* D. *is left far behind at the first mouthful, and has no chance with him. And when it is all gone he laughs, as if his enjoyment of it lasts still.*]

D. Do you think I could have a pen, ink and paper, please?

W. Right you are, sir. [*Runs off with the dinner things and returns with pen, ink and paper. These he places before* D., *who writes the following letter, which* WILLIAM *reads aloud from over his shoulder as* D. *writes.* "*My dear Peg-got-ty, I have come here safe. Bar-kis is wil-ling. My love to ma-ma. Yours af-fec-tion-ate-ly, Da-vid.* P.S.—*He says he par-tic-u-lar-ly wants you to*

know Bar-kis is will-ing." When this is done, he folds it, puts it in an envelope, and addresses it "Cla-ra Peg-got-ty, The Rook-er-y, Blun-der-stone."] Where might you be going to school?

D. Near London.

W. [*Looking very low-spirited*] Oh! my eye! I am sorry for that.

D. Why?

W. [*Shaking his head*] Oh, Lord! that's the school where they broke the boy's ribs—two ribs—a little boy he was. I should say he was—let me see—how old are you, about?

D. Between eight and nine.

W. That's just his age. He was eight years and six months old when they broke his first rib; eight years and eight months old when they broke his second, and did for him.

D. Oh! dear! How was it done?

W. [*Dismally*] With whopping.

[*At this moment the coach-horn blows from behind the stage.*]

D. [*Getting up, and taking his purse out of his pocket*] Is there anything to pay, please? [*Said hesitatingly.*

W. There's a sheet of letter-paper. Did you ever buy a sheet of letter-paper? [D. *shakes his head.*] It's dear, on account of the duty. Threepence. That's the way we're taxed in this country. There's nothing else, except the waiter. Never mind the ink. *I* lose by that.

D. What should you—what should I—how much ought I to—what would it be right to pay the waiter, if you please?

W. If I hadn't a family, and that family hadn't the cowpock, I wouldn't take a sixpence. If I didn't support a aged pairint, and a lovely sister, [*here* WILLIAM *is greatly agitated*] I wouldn't take a farthing. If I had a good place, and was treated well here, I should beg acceptance of a trifle, instead of taking of it. But I live on broken wittles—and I sleep on the coals.

[*Bursts into tears.*

[D. *looks very much concerned for his misfortunes, and gives him a shilling, which he receives with much humility and veneration, and spins up with his thumb. The coach-horn blows again, and they*

go out, D. *going first, and* WILLIAM *following, with his finger to the side of his nose. After a moment's interval, a woman's voice is heard from behind.*]

Voice. Take care of that child, George, or he'll *burst!*

[*Curtain falls.*

BETSEY TROTWOOD AT HOME

(FROM *David Copperfield*)

CHARACTERS.

MISS BETSEY TROTWOOD .	*An elderly lady.*
"MR. DICK" . . .	*A harmless lunatic.*
JANET	*Maid-servant to Miss Betsey Trotwood.*
DAVID COPPERFIELD . .	*A small boy, to whom Miss Betsey Trotwood is great-aunt.*
MR. MURDSTONE . .	*David Copperfield's step-father.*
MISS MURDSTONE . .	*His sister.*

SCENE.—*The front garden to Miss Betsey Trotwood's cottage at Dover.*

The action of SCENE II. *takes place a few days after that of* SCENE I.

[*Time:* SCENE I.—12 *minutes;* SCENE II.—20 *minutes.*]

Description of Characters.

MISS BETSEY TROTWOOD: A tall, hard-featured lady, but by no means ill-looking. She has an inflexibility in her face, in her voice, and in her gait and carriage; but her features are rather handsome than otherwise, though unbending and austere. Her hair, which is grey, is arranged in two plain divisions, under a "mob-cap," *i. e.* a cap with side pieces fastening under the chin. Her dress is of lavender colour, and perfectly neat, but scantily made—in form something like a riding-habit with the superfluous skirt cut off. She wears at her side a gentleman's gold watch, with an appropriate chain and seals; and she has some linen at her throat not unlike a shirt-collar, and things

at her wrists like little shirt-wristbands. She is given to speaking very abruptly and determinedly, but she is at heart a very kind-hearted woman. Her pet aversion is donkeys, which the donkey-boys delight to drive over a piece of green in front of her house that she claims as her own private property. In Scene I. she wears a handkerchief tied over her cap, a pair of gardening gloves on her hands, and a gardening pocket like a tollman's apron. These are discarded in Scene II., in which she wears a black silk apron. For her appearance in these scenes see, respectively, the illustrations on pages 129 and 136.

"MR. DICK": A florid, pleasant-looking gentleman with a grey and curiously-bowed head, who is much given to shutting up one eye in a grotesque manner, nodding his head, and laughing. His grey eyes are prominent and large, with a kind of watery brightness in them, and he has a peculiarly vacant manner. He is dressed in a loose, grey morning coat and waistcoat, and white trousers; and has his watch in his fob, and his money in his pocket, which he rattles as if he is very proud of it. See illustration on page 136, and—for his kite especially—that to *David Copperfield*, page 392: "My Aunt Astonishes Me."

JANET: A pretty, blooming girl of about nineteen or twenty, and a perfect picture of neatness.

DAVID COPPERFIELD: A small boy of ten. When he appears at the beginning of Scene I. he has a hat that is crushed and bent, and shoes whose soles have shed themselves bit by bit, and whose upper leathers have broken and burst until the very shape and form of shoes has departed from them. He has no coat, and his shirt and trousers are torn, and stained with grass and soil. His hair is uncombed, and his face, neck, and hands are, from unaccustomed exposure to the air and sun, burnt to a berry-brown, while from head to foot he is powdered as white with chalk and dust as if he has come out of a lime-kiln. On his reappearance he is enrobed in a shirt and a pair of trousers belonging to Mr. Dick, and tied up in two or three great shawls. He wears the same strange-looking attire in Scene II. See illustrations, pages 129 and 136.

MR. MURDSTONE: A gloomy and stern-looking gentleman with black hair and whiskers. He has a kind of "shallow" black eye, a squareness about the lower part of the face, regular eyebrows, and the dotted indication of a strong black beard which he shaves every day. Both he and his sister are dressed in deep mourning. See illustration on page 136.

MISS JANE MURDSTONE: A gloomy-looking and "metallic" lady, dark like her brother, whom she greatly resembles in face and voice, and with very heavy eyebrows nearly meeting over her large nose. She carries with her a "jail of a bag," which hangs upon her arm by a heavy chain. See as above.

N.B.—Of the following two Scenes, the first is *complete in itself;* and it can therefore be acted independently of Scene II. But if Scene II. is acted, it should be preceded by Scene I.

SCENE I.

Miss Betsey Trotwood, "Mr. Dick," Janet, and David Copperfield.

Arrangement of Stage.

Back of stage arranged to represent the front of a country cottage, the stage being arranged as a garden. A door at the back acts as the front door of the cottage. Across the left-hand back corner is some low trellis-work containing a hinged gate. Entrance from behind must be possible by this gate. On the side of the stage opposite the trellis-work should be a garden-seat, and a low garden-chair can be placed somewhere near it. When the curtain rises, the stage is empty. Shortly David comes on from behind and stands outside the garden-gate, looking wistfully over it. Betsey Trotwood appears, through the house door at the back of the stage, carrying a large knife. As she comes out she catches sight of David.

B. T. [*Shaking her head, and making a distant chop in the air with her knife*] Go away! Go along! No boys here!

[D. *watches her, as she marches to a corner of her*

garden, and stoops to dig up some little root there. Then he goes softly in and stands beside her, touching her with his finger.]

D. If you please, ma'am—— [MISS BETSEY *starts and looks up.*] If you please, aunt.

B. T. [*In a tone of great amazement*] EH?

D. If you please, aunt, I am your nephew.

B. T. Oh, Lord! [*Sits flat down in the garden-path.*

D. I am David Copperfield, of Blunderstone, in Suffolk —where you came, on the night when I was born, and saw my dear mama. I have been very unhappy since she died. I have been slighted, and taught nothing, and thrown upon myself, and put to work not fit for me. It made me run away to you. I was robbed at first setting out, and have walked all the way, and have never slept in a bed since I began the journey.

[*Here* D.*'s self-support gives way all at once; and with a movement of his hands, intended to show her his ragged state, he breaks into a passion of crying. His aunt sets him down on the garden-seat, runs into the house, brings out a bottle of aniseed water, another labelled "Anchovy Sauce," and another of salad dressing. From each of these in turn she pours some of the contents into a glass and makes* D. *drink it. Then she fetches a shawl, lays him down on the seat with his head on the shawl, and his feet on the handkerchief from her head, and sits down on the other chair.*]

B. T. Mercy on us! Mercy on us! Mercy on us! [*Loudly*] Janet! [JANET *comes into the garden.*] Janet! go upstairs, give my compliments to Mr. Dick, and say I wish to speak to him. [JANET *looks surprised to see* D. *lying stiffly on the garden-seat, and goes on her errand.* MISS BETSEY, *with her hands behind her, walks up and down, until* MR. DICK *comes in laughing.* JANET *follows, and stands near the door.*] Mr. Dick, don't be a fool, because nobody can be more discreet than you can, when you choose. We all know that. So don't be a fool, whatever you are. [MR. DICK *is serious instantly.*] Mr. Dick, you have heard me mention David Copperfield? Now don't pretend not to have a memory, because you and I know better.

Mr. D. [*Who does not appear to remember much about*

David Makes Himself Known to his Aunt.

it] David Copperfield? *David* Copperfield? Oh yes, to be sure. David, certainly.

B. T. Well, this is his boy, his son. He would be as like his father as it's possible to be, if he was not so like his mother, too.

Mr. D. His son? David's son? Indeed!

B. T. Yes, and he has done a pretty piece of business. He has run away. Ah! His sister, Betsey Trotwood, never would have run away.

[*Shakes her head firmly, confident in the character and behaviour of the girl who never was born.*]

Mr. D. Oh! you think she wouldn't have run away?

B. T. [*Sharply*] Bless and save the man, how he talks! Don't I know she wouldn't? She would have lived with her god-mother, and we should have been devoted to one another. Where, in the name of wonder, should his sister, Betsey Trotwood, have run from, or to?

Mr. D. Nowhere.

B. T. [*Softened by the reply*] Well then, how can you pretend to be wool-gathering, Dick, when you are as sharp as a surgeon's lancet? Now, here you see young David Copperfield, and the question I put to you is, what shall I do with him?

Mr. D. [*Feebly, and scratching his head*] What shall you do with him? Oh! do with him?

B. T. [*With a grave look, and her forefinger held up*] Yes. Come! I want some very sound advice.

Mr. D. [*Considering, and looking vacantly at* D.] Why, if I was you, I should—— [*The contemplation of* D. *seems to inspire him with a sudden idea.*] I should wash him!

B. T. [*Turning round with an air of triumph*] Janet, Mr. Dick sets us all right. Heat the bath! [JANET *goes off quickly. Shortly afterwards* MISS BETSEY *picks up* D. *and carries him off. When left alone,* MR. DICK *strolls about aimlessly, alternately scratching his head as if worried about something, and laughing, till* MISS BETSEY *comes back. She walks up and down, whilst talking to herself*] Whatever possessed that poor unfortunate Baby, that she must go and be married again, *I* can't conceive.

Mr. D. Perhaps she fell in love with her second husband.

B. T. Fell in love! What do you mean? What business had she to do it?

Mr. D. [*Simpering, after thinking a little*] Perhaps she did it for pleasure.

B. T. Pleasure, indeed! A mighty pleasure for the poor Baby to fix her simple faith upon any dog of a fellow, certain to ill-use her in some way or other. What did she propose to herself, I should like to know? She had had one husband. She had seen David Copperfield out of the world, who was always running after wax dolls from his cradle. She had got a baby—oh, there were a pair of babies when she gave birth to the child within there, that Friday night—and what more did she want? [MR. DICK *shakes his head, as if he thinks there is no getting over this.*] She couldn't even have a baby like anybody else. Where was this child's sister, Betsey Trotwood? Not forthcoming. Don't tell me! [MR. DICK *seems quite frightened.*] That little man of a doctor, with his head on one side, Jellips, or whatever his name was, what was *he* about? All he could do was to say to me, like a robin red-breast—as he *is*—"It's a boy." A boy! Yah, the imbecility of the whole set of 'em! [*The heartiness of the ejaculation startles* MR. DICK *exceedingly.*] And then, as if this was not enough, and she had not stood sufficiently in the light of this child's sister, Betsey Trotwood, she marries a second time—goes and marries a Murderer—or a man with a name like it—and stands in *this* child's light! And the natural consequence is, as anybody but a baby might have foreseen, that he prowls and wanders. He's as like Cain before he was grown up, as he can be. And then there's that woman with the Pagan name, that Peggotty, *she* goes and gets married next. Because she has not seen enough of the evil attending such things, *she* goes and gets married next, as the child relates. I only hope [*shakes her head*] that her husband is one of those Poker husbands who abound in the newspapers, and will beat her well with one. [*At this moment* JANET *comes in, all smiles, and leading* D. *by the hand. He is now dressed as described previously, and looks clean.* MISS BETSEY *goes over to him and addresses* MR. DICK *with a grave look, and with her forefinger up as before*] Now, Mr. Dick, I am going to ask you another question. Look at this child.

Mr. D. [*With an attentive, puzzled face*] David's son?

B. T. Exactly so. What would you do with him, now?

Mr. D. Do with David's son?

B. T. Aye. With David's son.

Mr. D. Oh! Yes. Do with—I should put him to bed.

B. T. [*With the same complacent triumph as before*] Janet! Mr. Dick sets us all right. If the bed is ready, we'll take him up to it. [JANET *is leading* D. *indoors, when* MISS BETSEY *happens to glance towards the trellis-work. She instantly becomes rigid with indignation*] JANET! DONKEYS!

[*She rushes off through the gate, and* JANET *follows her, flourishing a big stick.*] [*Curtain falls.*

SCENE II.

Miss Betsey Trotwood, "Mr. Dick," Janet, David Copperfield, Mr. Murdstone, Miss Jane Murdstone.

Arrangement of Stage.

In *David Copperfield* part of this Scene takes place in "Mr. Dick's" room, and part in Miss Betsey Trotwood's parlour. Here, the whole is arranged as taking place in the garden, so that no alteration of Scene is required. When the curtain rises, "Mr. Dick" is seen writing at a small table which stands behind the garden-seat and opposite to the garden-gate. The table is strewn with papers, and behind it in the corner stands a large kite, about seven feet high, which is covered with sheets of closely-written MS. There are two other small chairs at the side of the garden near the gate. As "Mr. Dick" is writing, accompanying this by alternate laughs and scratchings of the head with his quill, David enters by the house-door, attired as he was at the conclusion of the last Scene.

Mr. D. [*Laying down his pen*] Ha! Phœbus! How does the world go? I'll tell you what, [*in a lower tone*] I shouldn't wish it to be mentioned, but it's a [*beckons to* D., *and puts his lips close to his ear*]—it's a mad world. Mad as Bedlam, boy!

[*Takes snuff from a round box on the table, and laughs heartily.*]

D. My aunt sends her compliments, Mr. Dick, and she

would like to know how you are getting on with your Memorial.

Mr. D. Well, my compliments to her, and I—I believe I have made a start. I think I have made a start. [*Passes his hand among his grey hair, and casts anything but a confident look at his manuscript.*] You have been to school?

D. Yes, sir, for a short time.

Mr. D. [*Looking earnestly at* D., *and taking up his pen to note it down*] Do you recollect the date when King Charles the First had his head cut off?

D. I believe it happened in the year sixteen hundred and forty-nine.

Mr. D. [*Scratching his ear with his pen*] Well! So the books say; but I don't see how that can be. Because, if it was so long ago, how could the people about him have made that mistake of putting some of the trouble out of *his* head, after it was taken off, into *mine?* [D. *looks much surprised by the inquiry, and shakes his head.*] It's very strange, [*casts a despondent look upon his papers, and passes his hand among his hair again*] that I never can get that quite right. I never can make that perfectly clear. But no matter, no matter! [*cheerfully, and rousing himself*] there's time enough! My compliments to Miss Trotwood, I am getting on very well indeed. [D. *is going away when* MR. DICK *directs his attention to the kite.*] What do you think of that for a kite?

D. It is a beautiful one.

Mr. D. I made it. We'll go and fly it, you and I. Do you see this?

[*Points to the MSS. with which it is covered.*

D. Yes, sir. Is that writing all done by you?

Mr. D. Yes, David. Those are the facts that I am writing in my Memorial to the Lord Chancellor. You see there's plenty of string, and when it flies high, it takes the facts a long way. That's my manner of diffusing 'em. I don't know where they may come down. It's according to circumstances, and the wind, and so forth; but I take my chance of that.

[D. *is just going away, when* MISS BETSEY *emerges suddenly from the house-door calling out,* "JANET! DONKEYS!" *She stops at the garden-gate and gesticulates wildly, shaking her fist over the gate.*]

B. T. Go along with you! You have no business there. How dare you trespass? Go along! Oh, you bold-faced thing!

[*Meanwhile* JANET *has followed her mistress out of the house-door, flourishing a stick. She rushes through the gate and disappears.* DAVID *comes up to his aunt, and after looking in the same direction as herself, gets behind her and whispers to her in a frightened sort of way.*]

D. Aunt Betsey, that is Mr. Murdstone, and Miss Murdstone with him.

B. T. [*Still shaking her head*] I don't care who it is! I won't be trespassed upon. I won't allow it. Go away! Janet, turn him round. Lead him off!

[*As* MISS BETSEY *says this, sounds are heard from behind as of the stick being applied to a donkey's hide, and confused shouts as from* JANET *and the donkey-boys, and above all a donkey's bray, "Hee-haw, Hee-haw." Then* MISS BETSEY *suddenly wheels round, takes* D. *with her, sits down on the other side of the stage and picks up some sewing from the seat.* MR. DICK *has meanwhile escaped within the house. When* MISS BETSEY *has been seated a moment,* MR. MURDSTONE *and* MISS MURDSTONE *appear at the garden-gate, looking very hot and very angry.* MISS BETSEY *takes not the slightest notice of them, until* JANET *comes in by the same gate—also looking slightly warm, but rather as if she had enjoyed the work of driving off the donkeys—and announces them.*]

J. Mr. Murdstone and Miss Murdstone to see you, ma'am.

D. [*Trembling*] Shall I go away, aunt?

B. T. No, sir. Certainly not! [*With this she pushes* D. *into a corner, and fences him in with a chair, as if it were a prison or a bar of justice. This position he continues to occupy during the whole interview. Then she turns to* MR. *and* MISS MURDSTONE.] Oh! I was not aware at first to whom I had the pleasure of objecting. But I don't allow anybody to ride over that turf. I make no exceptions. I don't allow anybody to do it.

Miss M. Your regulation is rather awkward to strangers.

B. T. Is it?

[JANET *places chairs, and they sit down.* JANET *stands behind the door.*]

Mr. M. Miss Trotwood!

B. T. I beg your pardon. You are the Mr. Murdstone who married the widow of my late nephew, David Copperfield, of Blunderstone Rookery?—Though why Rookery, *I* don't know!

Mr. M. I am.

B. T. You'll excuse my saying, sir, that I think it would have been a much better and happier thing if you had let that poor child alone.

Miss M. [*Bridling*] I so far agree with what Miss Trotwood has remarked, that I consider our lamented Clara to have been, in all essential respects, a mere child.

B. T. It is a comfort to you and me, ma'am, who are getting on in life, and are not likely to be made unhappy by our personal attractions, that nobody can say the same of us.

Miss M. No doubt! And it certainly might have been, as you say, a better and happier thing for my brother if he had never entered into such a marriage. I have always been of that opinion.

B. T. I have no doubt you have. Janet! my compliments to Mr. Dick, and beg him to come down. [*Until he comes,* MISS BETSEY *sits perfectly upright, frowning at the gate. When he comes, she performs the ceremony of introduction.*] Mr. Dick. An old and intimate friend, on whose judgment [*with emphasis, as an admonition to* MR. DICK, *who is biting his forefinger and looking rather foolish*] I rely.

[MR. DICK *takes his finger out of his mouth on this hint, and stands among the group, with a grave and attentive expression of face.* MISS BETSEY *inclines her head to* MR. MURDSTONE.]

Mr. M. Miss Trotwood! On the receipt of your letter, I considered it an act of greater justice to myself, and perhaps of more respect to you——

B. T. [*Eyeing him keenly*] Thank you. You needn't mind me.

Mr. M. To answer it in person, however inconvenient the journey, rather than by letter. This unhappy boy who has run away from his friends and his occupation——

Miss M. [*Interposing, and directing general attention to*

The Momentous Interview.

D.] And whose appearance is perfectly scandalous and disgraceful.

Mr. M. Jane Murdstone, have the goodness not to interrupt me. This unhappy boy, Miss Trotwood, has been the occasion of much domestic trouble and uneasiness, both during the lifetime of my late dear wife, and since. He has a sullen, rebellious spirit; a violent temper; and an untoward, intractable disposition. Both my sister and myself have endeavoured to correct his vices, but ineffectually. And I have felt—we both have felt, I may say, my sister being fully in my confidence—that it is right you should receive this grave and dispassionate assurance from our lips.

Miss M. It can hardly be necessary for me to confirm anything stated by my brother; but I beg to observe, that, of all the boys in the world, I believe this is the worst boy.

B. T. [*Shortly*] Strong!

Miss M. But not at all too strong for the facts.

B. T. Ha! Well, sir?

Mr. M. [*Whose face darkens more and more, the more he and* Miss Betsey *observe each other, which they do narrowly*] I have my own opinions as to the best mode of bringing him up; they are founded, in part, on my knowledge of him, and, in part, on my knowledge of my own means and resources. I am responsible for them to myself, I act upon them, and I say no more about them. It is enough that I place this boy under the eye of a friend of my own, in a respectable business; that it does not please him; that he runs away from it; makes himself a common vagabond about the country; and comes here, in rags, to appeal to you, Miss Trotwood. I wish to set before you, honourably, the exact consequences—so far as they are within my knowledge—of your abetting him in this appeal.

B. T. But about the respectable business first. If he had been your own boy, you would have put him to it, just the same, I suppose?

Miss M. [*Striking in*] If he had been my brother's own boy, his character, I trust, would have been altogether different.

B. T. Or if the poor child, his mother, had been alive, he would still have gone into the respectable business, would he?

Mr. M. [*With an inclination of his head*] I believe that Clara would have disputed nothing which myself and my sister, Jane Murdstone, were agreed was for the best.

[MISS MURDSTONE *confirms this with an audible murmur.*]

B. T. Humph! Unfortunate baby! [MR. DICK, *who has been rattling his money all the time, is rattling it so loudly now, that* MISS BETSEY *feels it necessary to check him with a look.*] The poor child's annuity died with her?

Mr. M. Died with her.

B. T. And there was no settlement of the little property —the house and garden—the what's-its-name Rookery without any rooks in it—upon her boy?

Mr. M. It had been left to her, unconditionally, by her first husband——

B. T. [*With the greatest irascibility and impatience*] Good Lord, man, there's no occasion to say that. Left to her unconditionally! I think I see David Copperfield looking forward to any condition of any sort or kind, though it stared him point-blank in the face! Of course it was left to her unconditionally. But when she married again —when she took that most disastrous step of marrying you, in short, to be plain—did no one put in a word for the boy at that time?

Mr. M. My late wife loved her second husband, ma'am, and trusted implicitly in him.

B. T. [*Shaking her head at him*] Your late wife, sir, was a most unworldly, most unhappy, most unfortunate baby. That's what *she* was. And now, what have you got to say next?

Mr. M. Merely this, Miss Trotwood. I am here to take David back—to take him back unconditionally, to dispose of him as I think proper, and to deal with him as I think right. I am not here to make any promise, or give any pledge to anybody. You may possibly have some idea, Miss Trotwood, of abetting him in his running away, and in his complaints to you. Your manner, which I must say does not seem intended to propitiate, induces me to think it possible. Now I must caution you that if you abet him once, you abet him for good and all; if you step in between him and me, now, you must step in, Miss Trotwood, for ever. I cannot trifle, or be trifled with. I am here, for the first and last time, to take him away. Is he ready to go? If he is not—and you tell me he is

not—on any pretence; it is indifferent to me what—my doors are shut against him henceforth, and yours, I take it for granted, are open to him.

[*To this address,* MISS BETSEY *listens with the closest attention, sitting perfectly upright, her hands folded on one knee, and looking grimly on the speaker. When he has finished, she turns her eyes so as to command* MISS MURDSTONE, *without otherwise disturbing her attitude.*]

B. T. Well, ma'am, have *you* got anything to remark?

Miss M. Indeed, Miss Trotwood, all that I could say has been so well said by my brother, and all that I know to be the fact has been so plainly stated by him, that I have nothing to add except my thanks for your politeness. For your very great politeness, I am sure.

[*With an irony which does not affect* MISS BETSEY.

B. T. And what does the boy say? Are you ready to go, David?

D. [*Taking his aunt's hand*] Oh, no, aunt! Please do not let Mr. Murdstone take me away. Neither Mr. Murdstone nor Miss Murdstone has ever liked me, or has ever been kind to me.

B. T. Mr. Dick, what shall I do with this child?

[MR. DICK *considers, hesitates, and brightens.*

Mr. D. Have him measured for a suit of clothes directly.

B. T. [*Triumphantly*] Mr. Dick, give me your hand, for your common sense is invaluable. [*Having shaken it with great cordiality, she pulls* D. *towards her and turns to* MR. MURDSTONE.] You can go when you like; I'll take my chance with the boy. If he's all you say he is, at least I can do as much for him, then, as you have done. But I don't believe a word of it.

Mr. M. [*Shrugging his shoulders, as he rises*] Miss Trotwood, if you were a gentleman——

B. T. Bah! Stuff and nonsense! Don't talk to me!

Miss M. [*Rising*] How exquisitely polite! Overpowering, really!

B. T. [*Turning a deaf ear to* MISS MURDSTONE, *and continuing to address* MR. MURDSTONE, *and to shake her head at him*] Do you think I don't know what kind of life you must have led that poor, unhappy, misdirected baby? Do you think I don't know what a woeful day it was for the soft little creature when *you* first came in

her way—smirking and making great eyes at her, I'll be bound, as if you couldn't say "boh!" to a goose!

Miss M. I never heard anything so elegant!

B. T. Do you think I can't understand you as well as if I had seen you, now that I *do* see and hear you—which I tell you candidly, is anything but a pleasure to me? Oh yes, bless us! who so smooth and silky as Mr. Murdstone at first? The poor, benighted innocent had never seen such a man. He was made of sweetness. He worshipped her. He doted on her boy—tenderly doted on him! He was to be another father to him, and they were all to live together in a garden of roses, weren't they? Ugh! Get along with you, do!

Miss M. I never heard anything like this person in my life!

B. T. And when you had made sure of the poor little fool—God forgive me that I should call her so, and she gone where *you* won't go in a hurry—because you had not done wrong enough to her and hers, you must begin to train her, must you? Begin to break her, like a poor caged bird, and wear her deluded life away, in teaching her to sing *your* notes?

Miss M. [*In a perfect agony at not being able to turn the current of* MISS BETSEY'S *address towards herself*] This is either insanity or intoxication, and my suspicion is that it's intoxication.

[MISS BETSEY, *without taking the least notice of the interruption, continues to address herself to* MR. MURDSTONE *as if there had been no such thing.*]

B. T. [*Shaking her finger at him*] Mr. Murdstone, you were a tyrant to the simple baby, and you broke her heart. She was a loving baby—I know that; I knew it years before *you* ever saw her—and through the best part of her weakness you gave her the wounds she died of. There is the truth for your comfort, however you like it. And you and your instruments may make the most of it.

Miss M. Allow me to inquire, Miss Trotwood, whom you are pleased to call, in a choice of words in which I am not experienced, my brother's instruments.

B. T. [*Still stone-deaf to the voice, and utterly unmoved by it*] It was clear enough, as I have told you, years before *you* ever saw her—and why, in the mysterious dispensations of Providence, you ever did see her, is more than humanity can comprehend—it was clear enough that

the poor soft little thing would marry somebody, at some time or other; but I did hope it wouldn't have been as bad as it has turned out. That was the time, Mr. Murdstone, when she gave birth to her boy here—to the poor child you sometimes tormented her through afterwards, which is a disagreeable remembrance, and makes the sight of him odious now. Aye, aye! you needn't wince! I know it's true without that. [MR. MURDSTONE *has been standing by the gate, all this while, with a smile upon his face, though his black eyebrows are heavily contracted. Now, though the smile is on his face still, he seems to breathe as if he had been running.*] Good day, sir, and good-bye! Good day to you, too, ma'am. [*Turns suddenly upon his sister.*] Let me see you ride a donkey over *my* green again, and as sure as you have a head upon your shoulders, I'll knock your bonnet off, and tread upon it!

[MISS MURDSTONE, *without a word in answer, discreetly puts her arm through her brother's, and walks haughtily off the stage,* MISS BETSEY *remaining looking after them.*] [*Curtain falls.*

MR. MICAWBER'S PROSPECTS

(FROM *David Copperfield*)

CHARACTERS.

MR. WILKINS MICAWBER .	*A gentleman who is "waiting for something to turn up."*
MRS. MICAWBER . .	*His wife.*
DAVID COPPERFIELD . TRADDLES . .	*Law-students.*

SCENE.—*David Copperfield's "chambers" in Buckingham Street in the Adelphi.*

[*Time.*—25 *minutes.*]

Description of Characters.

MR. WILKINS MICAWBER: A stoutish, middle-aged man, dressed in a brown surtout, and black tights and shoes, with no more hair upon his head (which is a large one and very shining) than there is upon an egg, and with a very extensive face. His clothes are shabby, but he has on an imposing shirt collar. He carries a jaunty sort of stick, with a large pair of tassels to it, and a quizzing-glass hung outside his coat for ornament. He is accustomed to speaking with a certain condescending roll in his voice, and a certain indescribable air of doing something genteel. For illustrations of his characteristic appearance and pose see *David Copperfield*, page 204: "Somebody Turns Up"; page 328: "We are Disturbed in Our Cookery"; and page 423: "Mr. Micawber Delivers Some Valedictory Remarks."

MRS. MICAWBER: A thin and faded lady, not at all young. She is, in her temperament, quite as elastic as her husband. For her appearance see the last two illustrations named above.

DAVID COPPERFIELD: A well-dressed youth of eighteen or nineteen. See illustrations, as for Mrs. Micawber.

TRADDLES: A simple, good-natured young man of retiring manners, with a comic head of hair, and eyes that are rather wide open. See illustrations, as above.

Arrangement of Stage.

A table covered with a white cloth near centre of stage. Four old-fashioned mahogany chairs pushed back from it. A side-table, on which are the dinner things, evidently just cleared from the centre table. A punch-bowl, decanters and glasses on the centre table. When the curtain rises, Mr. Micawber is in the act of pouring boiling water from a kettle into the punch-bowl, while the others are sitting round watching him.

Mr. M. [*Mirthfully*] My dear Copperfield, this is luxurious. This is a way of life which reminds me of the period when I was myself in a state of celibacy, and Mrs. Micawber had not yet been solicited to plight her faith at the Hymeneal altar.

Mrs. M. [*Archly*] He means solicited by him, Mr. Copperfield. He cannot answer for others.

Mr. M. [*With sudden seriousness*] My dear, I have no desire to answer for others. I am too well aware that when, in the inscrutable decrees of Fate, you were reserved for me, it is possible you may have been reserved for one, destined, after a protracted struggle, at length to fall a victim to pecuniary involvements of a complicated nature. I understand your allusion, my love. I regret it, but I can bear it. [*Flourishes the punch-ladle while saying this.*

Mrs. M. [*In tears*] Micawber! Have I deserved this? I, who never have deserted you; who never *will* desert you, Micawber! [*Gets up and casts herself bodily upon* MR. M.

Mr. M. [*Much affected*] My love, you will forgive, and our old and tried friend Copperfield will, I am sure, forgive, the momentary laceration of a wounded spirit, made sensitive by a recent collision with the Minion of Power —in other words, with a ribald Turncock attached to the waterworks—and will pity, not condemn, its excesses. [*Embraces* MRS. MICAWBER, *and presses* COPPERFIELD'S *hand. He then returns to the punch-bowl, and becomes cheerful again.*] But punch, my dear Copperfield, [*tastes*

it] like time and tide, waits for no man. Ah! it is at the present moment in high flavour. My love, will you give me your opinion? [*Hands a glass to* MRS. M.

Mrs. M. [*In great spirits again*] Excellent, my dear.

Mr. M. [*Ladling out the punch and handing glasses round*] Then I will drink, if my friend Copperfield will permit me to take that social liberty, to the days when my friend Copperfield and myself were younger, and fought our way in the world side by side. I may say, of myself and Copperfield, in words we have sung together before now, that

> "We twa hae run aboot the braes
> And pu'd the gowans fine"

—in a figurative point of view—on several occasions. I am not exactly aware what gowans may be, but I have no doubt that Copperfield and myself would frequently have taken a pull at them, if it had been feasible. [*Takes a pull at his punch. The others follow suit.*] Ahem! [*Clearing his throat.*] My dear, another glass?

Mrs. M. It must be very little, then.

C. and *T.* Oh no; nothing less than a glassful.

[MR. MICAWBER *ladles it out.*

Mrs. M. [*Sipping her punch*] As we are quite confidential here, Mr. Copperfield, Mr. Traddles being a part of our domesticity, I should much like to have your opinion on Mr. Micawber's prospects. For corn, as I have repeatedly said to Mr. Micawber, may be gentlemanly, but it is not remunerative. Commission to the extent of two and ninepence in a fortnight cannot, however limited our ideas, be considered remunerative.

T. Quite so.

C. Of course not.

Mrs. M. Then I ask myself this question. If corn is not to be relied upon, what is? Are coals to be relied upon? Not at all. We have turned our attention to that experiment, on the suggestion of my family, and we find it fallacious. [MR. MICAWBER, *leaning back in his chair with his hands in his pockets, eyes the others aside, and nods his head, as much as to say that the case is very clearly put.*] The articles of corn and coals being equally out of the question, Mr. Copperfield, I naturally look round the world, and say, "What is there in which a person of Mr. Micawber's talent is likely to succeed?"

And I exclude the doing anything on commission, because commission is not a certainty. What is best suited to a person of Mr. Micawber's peculiar temperament is, I am convinced, a certainty.

C. Just so, and it does Mr. Micawber great credit.

Mrs. M. I will not conceal from you, my dear Mr. Copperfield, that *I* have long felt the Brewing business to be particularly adapted to Mr. Micawber. Look at Barclay and Perkins! Look at Truman, Hanbury, and Buxton! It is on that extensive footing that Mr. Micawber, I know from my own knowledge of him, is calculated to shine; and the profits, I am told, are E-NOR—mous! But if Mr. Micawber cannot get into those firms—which decline to answer his letters, when he offers his services even in an inferior capacity—what is the use of dwelling upon that idea? None. I may have a conviction that Mr. Micawber's manners——

Mr. M. [*Interposing*] Hem! Really, my dear!

Mrs. M. [*Laying her brown glove on his hand*] My love, be silent. I may have a conviction, Mr. Copperfield, that Mr. Micawber's manners peculiarly qualify him for the Banking business. I may argue within myself, that if I had a deposit at a banking-house, the manners of Mr. Micawber, as representing that banking-house, would inspire confidence, and must extend the connexion. But if the various banking-houses refuse to avail themselves of Mr. Micawber's abilities, or receive the offer of them with contumely, what is the use of dwelling upon *that* idea? None. As to originating a banking-business, I may know that there are members of my family who, if they chose to place their money in Mr. Micawber's hands, might found an establishment of that description. But if they do *not* choose to place their money in Mr. Micawber's hands—which they don't—what is the use of that? Again I contend that we are no farther advanced than we were before.

C. [*Shaking his head*] Not a bit.

T. [*Shaking his head*] Not a bit.

Mrs. M. What do I deduce from this? What is the conclusion, my dear Mr. Copperfield, to which I am irresistibly brought? Am I wrong in saying, it is clear that we must live?

C. Not at all.

T. Not at all.

C. [*Sagely*] A person must either live or die.

Mrs. M. Just so. It is precisely that. And the fact is, my dear Mr. Copperfield, that we can *not* live without something widely different from existing circumstances shortly turning up. Now I am convinced, myself, and this I have pointed out to Mr. Micawber several times of late, that things cannot be expected to turn up of themselves. We must, in a measure, assist to turn them up. I may be wrong, but I have formed that opinion.

T. and *C.* Hear, hear!

Mrs. M. Very well. Then what do I recommend? Here is Mr. Micawber with a variety of qualifications—with great talent——

Mr. M. Really, my love.

Mrs. M. Pray, my dear, allow me to conclude. Here is Mr Micawber, with a variety of qualifications, with great talent—*I* should say, with genius, but that may be the partiality of a wife——

T. No.

C. Certainly not.

Mrs. M. And here is Mr. Micawber without any suitable position or employment. Where does that responsibility rest? Clearly on society. Then I would make a fact so disgraceful known, and boldly challenge society to set it right. It appears to me, my dear Mr. Copperfield, [*forcibly*] that what Mr. Micawber has to do, is to throw down the gauntlet to society, and say, in effect, "Show me who will take that up. Let the party immediately step forward."

C. And how do you think this can be done?

Mrs. M. By advertising in all the papers. It appears to me, that what Mr. Micawber has to do, in justice to himself, in justice to his family, and I will even go so far as to say in justice to society, by which he has been hitherto overlooked, is to advertise in all the papers; to describe himself plainly as so-and-so, with such and such qualifications, and to put it thus: "*Now* employ me, on remunerative terms, and address, post-paid, to *W. M.*, Post Office, Camden Town."

Mr. M. [*Making his shirt-collar meet in front of his chin, and glancing at* COPPERFIELD *sideways*] This idea of Mrs. Micawber's, my dear Copperfield, is, in fact, the Leap to which I alluded, when I last had the pleasure of seeing you.

C. [*Dubiously*] Advertising is rather expensive.

Mrs. M. Exactly so! Quite true, my dear Mr. Copperfield! I have made the identical observation to Mr. Micawber. It is for that reason, especially, that I think Mr. Micawber ought—as I have already said, in justice to himself, in justice to his family, and in justice to society—to raise a certain sum of money—on a bill. [MR. MICAWBER, *leaning back in his chair, trifles with his eye-glass, and casts his eyes up at the ceiling; but at the same time is observant of* TRADDLES, *who is looking at the fire.*] If no member of my family is possessed of sufficient natural feeling to negotiate that bill—I believe there is a better business-term to express what I mean——

Mr. M. [*With his eyes still cast up at the ceiling*] Discount.

Mrs. M. To discount that bill, then my opinion is, that Mr. Micawber should go into the City, should take that bill into the Money Market, and should dispose of it for what he can get. If the individuals in the Money Market oblige Mr. Micawber to sustain a great sacrifice, that is between themselves and their consciences. I view it, steadily, as an investment. I recommend Mr. Micawber, my dear Mr. Copperfield, to do the same; to regard it as an investment which is sure of return, and to make up his mind to *any* sacrifice. I will not—[*finishes her punch, and gathers her scarf about her shoulders, preparatory to her withdrawal*] I will not protract these remarks on the subject of Mr. Micawber's pecuniary affairs. At your fireside, my dear Mr. Copperfield, and in the presence of Mr. Traddles, who, though not so old a friend, is quite one of ourselves, I could not refrain from making you acquainted with the course *I* advise Mr. Micawber to take. I feel that the time is arrived when Mr. Micawber should exert himself and—I will add—assert himself, and it appears to me that these are the means. I am aware that I am merely a female, and that a masculine judgment is usually considered more competent to the discussion of such questions; still I must not forget that, when I lived at home with my papa and mama, my papa was in the habit of saying, "Emma's form is fragile, but her grasp of a subject is inferior to none." That my papa was too partial, I well know; but that he was an observer of character in some degree, my duty and my reason equally forbid me to doubt. [*Goes off for the purpose of dressing.*

C. Mr. Micawber, I congratulate you on the treasure you possess.

T. So do I, Mr. Micawber.

[MR. MICAWBER *extends his hand to each of them in succession, and then covers his face with his pocket-handkerchief, which has more snuff upon it than he is aware of. He then returns to the punch, in the highest state of exhilaration.*]

Mr. M. My dear Copperfield, in our children we live again, and, under the pressure of pecuniary difficulties, any accession to their number is doubly welcome. Mrs. Micawber has latterly had her doubts on this point, but I have dispelled them, and reassured her. As to her family, they are totally unworthy of her, and their sentiments are utterly indifferent to me, and they may go to the Devil. [*Takes a pull at his glass.*] Ah! Mr. Traddles, yours is a character, to the steady virtues of which I can lay no claim, but which, I thank Heaven, I can admire. [*Refills his glass.*] I pledge the young lady, unknown, whom Mr. Traddles has honoured with his affection, and who has reciprocated that affection by honouring and blessing, Mr. Traddles with *her* affection.

[MR. MICAWBER *and* COPPERFIELD *drink her health.*

T. I am very much obliged to you indeed. And I do assure you, she's the dearest girl——

Mr. M. And nothing but the serious assurance of my friend Copperfield can deprive me of the impression that my friend Copperfield loves and is beloved.

C. [*After a good deal of blushing and stammering*] Well, I will give you D.

Mr. M. [*Much excited, and running out of the door with a glass of punch*] My dear, Copperfield gives us D.

Mrs. M. [*From behind the stage*] Hear, hear! My dear Mr. Copperfield, I am delighted. Hear, hear!

[*Taps on the wall by way of applause.*

Mr. M. [*Returning*] To D.! [*Drinks heartily.*] To continue, my dear Copperfield. As you will readily understand, Mrs. Micawber and myself find Camden Town inconvenient, and the first thing I contemplate doing, when the advertisement shall have been the cause of something satisfactory turning up, is to move. There is a terrace at the western end of Oxford Street, fronting Hyde Park, on which I have always had my eye, but which I do not expect to attain immediately, as it would require a large

establishment. There will probably be an interval, in which I shall content myself with the upper part of a house, over some respectable place of business—say in Piccadilly—which will be a cheerful situation for Mrs. Micawber; and where, by throwing out a bow window, or carrying up the roof another story, or making some little alteration of that sort, we may live, comfortably and reputably, for a few years. Whatever is reserved for me, however, or wherever my abode may be, you may rely on this—there will always be a room for Mr. Traddles, and a knife and fork for my dear Copperfield. But I beg you to forgive my having launched into these practical and business-like details, and to excuse it as natural in one who is making entirely new arrangements in life.

[MRS. M. *here comes in dressed for leaving. While* TRADDLES *is getting on his coat,* MR. M. *slips a letter into* COPPERFIELD'S *hand, and whispers,* "Read it at your leisure." *General leave-takings are gone through,* MR. M. *gives* MRS. M. *his arm, and they pass out jauntily. As* TRADDLES *is following,* COPPERFIELD *detains him, and brings him back to the front of the stage.*]

C. Traddles, Mr. Micawber don't mean any harm, poor fellow; but, if I were you, I wouldn't lend him anything.

T. [*Smiling*] My dear Copperfield, I haven't got anything to lend.

C. You have got a name, you know.

T. [*With a thoughtful look*] Oh! You call *that* something to lend.

C. Certainly.

T. Oh! Yes, to be sure! I am very much obliged to you, Copperfield; but—I am afraid I have lent him that already.

C. For the bill that is to be a certain investment?

T. No. Not for that one. This is the first I have heard of that one. I have been thinking that he will most likely propose that one, on the way home. Mine's another.

C. I hope there will be nothing wrong about it.

T. I hope not. I should think not, though, because he told me, only the other day, that it was provided for. That was Mr. Micawber's expression—"Provided for."

[*Here* MR. M. *looks in again, and* TRADDLES *goes off.*

When he has gone COPPERFIELD *takes the letter from his pocket, sits down near the table and reads it aloud.*]

C. [*Reading*]

"SIR—for I dare not say my dear Copperfield,

"It is expedient that I should inform you that the undersigned is Crushed. Some flickering efforts to spare you the premature knowledge of his calamitous position, you may observe in him this day; but hope has sunk beneath the horizon, and the undersigned is Crushed.

"The present communication is penned within the personal range—I cannot call it the society—of an individual, in a state closely bordering on intoxication, employed by a broker. That individual is in legal possession of the premises, under a distress for rent. His inventory includes, not only the chattels and effects of every description belonging to the undersigned, as yearly tenant of this habitation, but also those appertaining to Mr. Thomas Traddles, lodger, a member of the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple.

"If any drop of gloom were wanting in the overflowing cup, which is now 'commended'—in the language of an immortal Writer—to the lips of the undersigned, it would be found in the fact, that a friendly acceptance granted to the undersigned, by the before-mentioned Mr. Thomas Traddles, for the sum of £23 4*s.* 9½*d.* is overdue, and is NOT provided for. Also, in the fact that the living responsibilities clinging to the undersigned will, in the course of nature, be increased by the sum of one more helpless victim; whose miserable appearance may be looked for—in round numbers—at the expiration of a period not exceeding six lunar months from the present date.

"After premising thus much, it would be a work of supererogation to add, that dust and ashes are for ever scattered

"On
"The
"Head
"Of
"WILKINS MICAWBER."

[*Shakes his head.*] Poor Traddles!

[*Curtain falls.*

MR. GUPPY'S PROPOSAL

(FROM *Bleak House*)

CHARACTERS.

ESTHER SUMMERSON .	. *Ward of John Jarndyce.*
MR. GUPPY . .	. *Clerk to the Firm of Kenge and Carboy, Solicitors.*

SCENE.—*The dining-room at Bleak House.*

[*Time.*—10 *minutes.*]

Description of Characters.

ESTHER SUMMERSON: A sweet-tempered girl of about twenty years of age. For illustration of her dress see page 154.

MR. GUPPY: A young man, very awkward and shy; dressed in a new suit of clothes, and with a shining hat, lilac kid gloves, a neckerchief of a variety of colours, a large hot-house flower in his button-hole, and a thick gold ring on his little finger. He is strongly scented with bear's grease and other perfumery. See illustration, page 154, and see also *Bleak House*, page 323: "The Young Man of the Name of Guppy."

Arrangement of Stage.

See illustration, page 154. Two tables, one having a writing-desk on it and the other laid for a meal for one person. Several chairs standing about. Esther Summerson is seated at her desk when the curtain rises, and Mr. Guppy then enters.

Mr. G. [*Advancing and speaking in a low voice*] My eye, miss! Mr. Boythorn's a Tartar.

E. S. Pray take some refreshment, sir.

[MR. GUPPY *sits down at the table, and begins*

nervously sharpening the carving-knife on the carving-fork. ESTHER *raises her eyes, whereupon he immediately looks at the dish, and begins to carve.*]

Mr. G. What will you take yourself, miss? You'll take a morsel of something?

E. S. No, thank you.

Mr. G. Shan't I give you a piece of anything at all, miss? [*Hurriedly drinks off a glass of wine.*

E. S. Nothing, thank you. I have only waited to see that you have everything you want. Is there anything I can order for you?

Mr. G. No, I am much obliged to you, miss, I'm sure. I've everything that I can require to make me comfortable—at least I—not comfortable—I'm never that. [*Drinks off two more glasses of wine, one after another.* ESTHER *rises to go.*] I beg your pardon, miss! [*Rises.*] But would you allow me the favour of a minute's private conversation? [ESTHER *sits down again, and* MR. GUPPY *brings a chair towards her table*] What follows is without prejudice, miss?

E. S. I don't understand what you mean.

Mr. G. It's one of our law terms, miss. You won't make any use of it to my detriment, at Kenge and Carboy's, or elsewhere? If our conversation shouldn't lead to anything, I am to be as I was, and am not to be prejudiced in my situation or worldly prospects. In short, it's in total confidence?

E. S. I am at a loss, sir, to imagine what you can have to communicate in total confidence to me, whom you have never seen but once; but I should be very sorry to do you any injury.

Mr. G. Thank you, miss. I'm sure of it—that's quite sufficient. [*All this time* MR. GUPPY *is either planing his forehead with his handkerchief, or tightly rubbing the palm of his left hand with the palm of his right.*] If you would excuse my taking another glass of wine, miss, I think it might assist me in getting on, without a continual choke that cannot fail to be mutually unpleasant. [*He does so, and comes back again.* ESTHER *takes the opportunity of moving well behind her table.*] You wouldn't allow me to offer you one, would you, miss?

E. S. Not any.

Mr. G. Not half a glass? Quarter? No! Then, to proceed. My present salary, Miss Summerson, at Kenge

and Carboy's, is two pound a week. When I first had the happiness of looking upon you, it was one-fifteen, and had stood at that figure for a lengthened period. A rise of five has since taken place, and a further rise of five is guaranteed at the expiration of a term not exceeding twelve months from the present date. My mother has a little property, which takes the form of a small life annuity; upon which she lives in an independent though unassuming manner, in the Old Street Road. She is eminently calculated for a mother-in-law. She never interferes, is all for peace, and her disposition easy. She has her failings—as who has not? But I never knew her do it when company was present; at which time you may freely trust her with wines, spirits, or malt liquors. My own abode is lodgings at Penton Place, Pentonville. It is lowly, but airy, open at the back, and considered one of the 'ealthiest outlets. Miss Summerson! In the mildest language, I adore you. Would you be so kind as to allow me—as I may say—to file a declaration—to make an offer.

[MR. GUPPY *goes down on his knees.*

E. S. Get up from that ridiculous position immediately, sir, or you will oblige me to break my implied promise and ring the bell.

Mr. G. Hear me out, miss! [*Folds his hands.*

E. S. I cannot consent to hear another word, sir, unless you get up from the carpet directly, and go and sit down at the table, as you ought to do if you have any sense at all. [*He looks at her piteously, but slowly obeys.*

Mr. G. [*With his hand upon his heart, and shaking his head in a melancholy manner over the tray*] Yet what a mockery it is, miss, to be stationed behind food at such a moment. The soul recoils from food at such a moment, miss.

E. S. I beg you to conclude. You have asked me to hear you out, and I beg you to conclude.

Mr. G. I will, miss. As I love and honour, so likewise I obey. Would that I could make Thee the subject of that vow, before the shrine!

E. S. That is quite impossible, and entirely out of the question.

Mr. G. I am aware—[*leans forward over the tray*]—I am aware that in a worldly point of view, according to all appearances, my offer is a poor one. But, Miss Summerson! Angel!—No, don't ring—I have been brought up

In Re *Guppy—Extraordinary Proceedings.*

in a sharp school, and am accustomed to a variety of general practice. Though a young man, I have ferreted out evidence, got up cases, and seen lots of life. Blest with your hand, what means might I not find of advancing your interests, and pushing your fortunes! What might I not get to know, nearly concerning you? I know nothing now, certainly; but what *might* I not, if I had your confidence, and you set me on?

E. S. You address my interest, sir, or what you suppose to be my interest, quite as unsuccessfully as you address my inclination; and you will now understand that I request you, if you please, to go away immediately.

Mr. G. Cruel miss, hear but another word! I think you must have seen that I was struck with those charms, on the day when I waited at the Whytorseller. I think you must have remarked that I could not forbear a tribute to those charms when I put up the steps of the 'ackney-coach. It was a feeble tribute to Thee, but it was well meant. Thy image has ever since been fixed in my breast. I have walked up and down, of an evening, opposite Jellyby's house, only to look upon the bricks that once contained Thee. This out of to-day, quite an unnecessary out so far as the attendance, which was its pretended object, went, was planned by me alone for Thee alone. If I speak of interest, it is only to recommend myself and my respectful wretchedness. Love was before it, and is before it.

E. S. I should be pained, Mr. Guppy, [*rises and puts her hand upon the bell-rope*] to do you, or any one who was sincere, the injustice of slighting any honest feeling, however disagreeably expressed. If you have really meant to give me a proof of your good opinion, though ill-timed and misplaced, I feel that I ought to thank you. I have very little reason to be proud, and I am not proud. I hope that you will now go away as if you had never been so exceedingly foolish, and attend to Messrs. Kenge and Carboy's business.

Mr. G. Half a minute, miss! [*Checks her as she is about to ring.*] This has been without prejudice?

E. S. I will never mention it, unless you should give me future occasion to do so.

Mr. G. A quarter of a minute, miss! In case you should think better—at any time, however distant, *that's* no consequence, for my feelings can never alter—of

anything I have said, particularly what might I not do—Mr. William Guppy, eighty-seven, Penton Place, or if removed, or dead—of blighted hopes or anything of that sort—care of Mrs. Guppy, three hundred and two, Old Street Road, will be sufficient.

[ESTHER *rings the bell, and* MR. GUPPY, *laying his written card upon the table, and making a dejected bow, departs.*] [*Curtain falls.*

MRS. SNAGSBY'S GUESTS

(FROM *Bleak House*)

CHARACTERS.

MR. SNAGSBY . .	*A law-stationer.*
MRS. SNAGSBY . .	*His wife.*
THE REV. MR. CHADBAND .	*A "vessel in the Ministry."*
MRS. CHADBAND . .	*His wife.*
GUSTER . . .	*Mrs. Snagsby's maid-of-all-work.*

SCENE.—*The drawing-room of Mr. Snagsby's house, Cook's Court, Cursitor Street.*

[*Time.*—9 *minutes.*]

Description of Characters.

MR. SNAGSBY: A mild, bald, timid man with a shining head, and a scrubby clump of black hair sticking out at the back. He tends to meekness and obesity, and very rarely is found speaking.

MRS. SNAGSBY: A short, shrewd woman, something too violently compressed about the waist, and with a sharp nose, inclining to be "frosty" towards the end.

THE REV. MR. CHADBAND: A large yellow man with a fat smile, who moves cumbrously, has a habit of fixing some person present with his eye, and arguing his points with that particular person, and never speaks without first putting up his great hand.

MRS. CHADBAND: A stern, severe-looking, silent woman.

GUSTER: A lean young woman of three or four-and-twenty, but looking a round ten years older. She is very excitable, and subject to "fits."

For each of the above characters see the illustration on page 160, which—it should be noticed—shows three more characters than are here introduced.

Arrangement of Stage.

A round table covered with a cloth and arranged for tea. Four or five old-fashioned mahogany chairs placed about the stage. Eatables are already on the table, and, when the curtain rises, Mr. and Mrs. Snagsby are putting the finishing touches to the preparations for receiving their guests.

Mr. S. [*Looking at all the preparations when they are completed, and coughing a cough of deference behind his hand*] At what time did you expect Mr. and Mrs. Chadband, my love?

Mrs. S. At six.

Mr. S. [*In a mild and casual way*] It's gone that.

Mrs. S. [*Reproachfully*] Perhaps you'd like to begin without them?

Mr. S. [*Looking as if he would like it very much*] No, my dear, no. I merely named the time.

Mrs. S. What's time to eternity?

Mr. S. Very true, my dear. Only when a person lays in victuals for tea, a person does it with a view—perhaps—more to time. And when a time is named for having tea, it's better to come up to it.

Mrs. S. [*With severity*] To come up to it! Up to it! As if Mr. Chadband was a fighter!

Mr. S. Not at all, my dear.

G. [*Falling flushed into the drawing-room, and much discomposed in her nerves*] Mr. and Mrs. Cheeseming, least which, Imeantersay, whatsername!

[*Retires conscience-stricken.*

Mr. C. [*Advancing with* MRS. C.] My friends, Peace be on this house! On the master thereof, on the mistress thereof, on the young maidens, and on the young men! My friends, why do I wish for peace? What is peace? Is it war? No. Is it strife? No. Is it lovely, and gentle, and beautiful, and pleasant, and serene, and joyful? O yes! Therefore, my friends, I wish for peace, upon you and upon yours.

[MRS. SNAGSBY *looks deeply edified.*

Mr. S. Amen.

Mr. C. Now, my friends, since I am upon this theme——

[GUSTER *presents herself.*

Mrs. S. [*In a bass voice, and without removing her eyes from* MR. CHADBAND] Go away!

Mr. C. Now, my friends, since I am upon this theme, and in my lowly path improving it——

G. One thousing seven hundred and eighty-two.

Mrs. S. [*More solemnly*] Go away!

Mr. C. Now, my friends, we will inquire in a spirit of love——

G. One thousing seven hundred and eighty-two.

Mr. C. [*Pausing with the resignation of a man accustomed to be persecuted*] Let us hear the maiden! Speak, maiden!

G. [*Breathlessly*] One thousing seven hundred and eighty-two, if you please, sir. Which he wished to know what the shilling ware for.

Mr. C. For? For his fare!

G. One thousing seven hundred and eighty-two, if you please, sir, insists on one and eightpence, or on summonsizzing the party.

[MRS. SNAGSBY *and* MRS. CHADBAND *are proceeding to grow shrill in indignation, when* MR. CHADBAND *quiets the tumult by lifting up his hand.*]

Mr. C. My friends, I remember a duty unfulfilled yesterday. It is right that I should be chastened in some penalty. I ought not to murmur. Rachael, pay the eightpence!

Mrs. S. [*Whispering, and looking hard at* MR. SNAGSBY] You hear this Apostle!

[*While* MR. CHADBAND *glows with humility and train oil,* MRS. CHADBAND *pays the money.*]

Mr. C. My friends, eightpence is not much; it might justly have been one and fourpence; it might justly have been half-a-crown. O let us be joyful, joyful! O let us be joyful! [*Stalks to the table, and, before taking a chair, lifts up his admonitory hand.*] My friends, what is this which we now behold as being spread before us? Refreshment. Do we need refreshment then, my friends? We do. And why do we need refreshment, my friends? Because we are but mortal, because we are but sinful, because we are but of the earth, because we are not of the air. Can we fly, my friends? We cannot. Why can we not fly, my friends?

Mr. Chadband "Improving" a Tough Subject.

Mr. S. [*In a cheerful and rather knowing tone*] No wings. [*Is immediately frowned down by* MRS. SNAGSBY.

Mr. C. [*Utterly rejecting and obliterating* MR. SNAGSBY'S *suggestion*] I say, my friends, why can we not fly? Is it because we are calculated to walk? It is. Could we walk, my friends, without strength? We could not. What should we do without strength, my friends? Our legs would refuse to bear us, our knees would double up, our ankles would turn over, and we should come to the ground. Then from whence, my friends, in a human point of view, do we derive the strength that is necessary to our limbs? Is it [*glances over the table*] from bread in various forms, from butter which is churned from the milk which is yielded unto us by the cow, from the eggs which are laid by the fowl, from ham, from tongue, from sausage, and from such like? It is. Then let us partake of the good things which are set before us!

[*Sits down at* MR. SNAGSBY'S *table, and lays about him prodigiously.*] [*Curtain falls.*

MR. GEORGE'S SHOOTING GALLERY

(FROM *Bleak House*)

CHARACTERS.

MR. GEORGE . . .	*Proprietor of the Shooting Gallery.*
PHIL SQUOD . . .	*His "familiar."*
GRANDFATHER SMALLWEED	*A miser and money-lender.*
JUDY	*His grand-daughter.*
CAB-DRIVER.	
STREET-LOAFER.	

SCENE.—*The living-room at "George's Shooting Gallery" in the neighbourhood of Leicester Square.*

[*Time.*—32 *minutes.*]

Description of Characters.

MR. GEORGE: A swarthy, bronzed man of fifty, well-made and good-looking, with crisp dark hair, bright eyes, and a broad chest. He is close-shaved, but has a habit of laying the open palm of his broad, brown hand upon his mouth, as though he had once worn a moustache; has a measured and heavy step; and, when he sits, sits forward on his chair as if he were, from long habit, allowing space for some dress or accoutrements that he has altogether laid aside. See illustration, page 168.

PHIL SQUOD: A grotesque little man with a large head, dressed in green baize apron and cap, and with his hands and face begrimed with dirt. One side of his face is speckled with the marks of gunpowder, and on this side he has no eyebrow, but on the other side is a

bushy black one. His hands are notched and seamed all over. He is very strong, and has a curious way of limping round with his shoulder against the wall, and tacking off at objects he wants to lay hold of instead of going straight to them, which has left a smear all round the wall, known as "Phil's mark." See illustration, page 168.

GRANDFATHER SMALLWEED: An old and dwarfish man, in a helpless condition as to his lower limbs, and nearly so as to his upper limbs; a mere clothes-bag, with a black skull-cap on the top of it. He is always rubbing his legs, is carried in on a chair, and is wearing a large top-hat over his skull-cap. See illustration, page 168, and see also *Bleak House*, page 386: "Mr. Smallweed Breaks the Pipe of Peace."

JUDY: A vixenish girl, sharp-featured and sharp of tongue. See illustration, page 168.

CAB-DRIVER, STREET-LOAFER } See illustration, as above.

Arrangement of Stage.

A small oblong deal table near a fireplace, with crockery upon it. Two chairs close at hand. Two mattresses rolled up and standing in a corner. In the opposite corner a cupboard. Some targets, fencing-masks and foils, a gun or two, a large sword, and dumb-bells lying about. When the curtain rises, Phil is on his knees lighting the fire, while Mr. George is coming in bare-headed and bare-chested, rubbing himself after a visit to the pump. This over, he brushes his head vigorously, puts on his jacket, fills his pipe, lights it, and marches slowly up and down.

G. And so, Phil, you were dreaming of the country last night?

P. Yes, guv'ner.

G. What was it like?

P. [*Considering*] I hardly know what it was like, guv'ner.

G. How do you know it was the country?

P. [*After further consideration*] On account of the grass, I think. And the swans upon it.

G. What were the swans doing on the grass?

P. They was a-eating of it, I expect.

[MR. GEORGE *resumes his march, and* PHIL *resumes his preparation of breakfast—preparation being limited to the setting forth of very simple breakfast requisites for two, and the broiling of a rasher of bacon at the fire in the rusty grate. At length the breakfast is ready.* MR. GEORGE *knocks the ashes out of his pipe on the hob, stands his pipe on the chimney-shelf, and sits down to the meal. When he has helped himself,* PHIL *follows suit; sitting at the extreme end of the little oblong table, and taking his plate on his knees.*]

G. [*Plying his knife and fork*] The country—why, I suppose you never clapped your eyes on the country, Phil?

P. [*Contentedly eating*] I see the marshes once.

G. What marshes?

P. *The* marshes, commander.

G. Where are they?

P. I don't know where they are; but I see 'em, guv'ner. They was flat. And miste.

G. I was born in the country, Phil.

P. Was you indeed, commander?

G. Yes. And bred there. [PHIL *elevates his one eyebrow, and, after respectfully staring at his master to express interest, swallows a great gulp of coffee, still staring at him.*] There's not a bird's note that I don't know. Not many an English leaf or berry that I couldn't name. Not many a tree that I couldn't climb yet, if I was put to it. I was a real country boy, once. My good mother lived in the country.

P. She must have been a fine old lady, guv'ner.

G. Aye! and not so old either, five-and-thirty years ago. But I'll wager that at ninety she would be near as upright as me, and near as broad across the shoulders.

P. Did she die at ninety, guv'ner?

G. No. Bosh! Let her rest in peace, God bless her! What set me on about country boys, and runaways, and good-for-nothings? You, to be sure! So you never clapped your eyes upon the country—marshes and dreams excepted. Eh? [PHIL *shakes his head.*] Do you want to see it?

P. N-no, I don't know as I do, particular.

G. The town's enough for you, eh?

P. Why, you see, commander, I ain't acquainted with anythink else, and I doubt if I ain't a-getting too old to take to novelties.

G. [*Pausing as he conveys his smoking saucer to his lips*] How old *are* you, Phil?

P. I'm something with a eight in it. It can't be eighty. Nor yet eighteen. It's betwixt 'em, somewheres.

G. [*Slowly putting down his saucer without tasting its contents*] Why, what the deuce, Phil——

[*Stops, seeing that* PHIL *is counting on his dirty fingers.*]

P. I was just eight, agreeable to the parish calculation, when I went with the tinker. I was sent on a errand, and I see him a-sittin' under a old buildin' with a fire all to himself wery comfortable, and he says, "Would you like to come along a me, my man?" I says "Yes," and him and me and the fire goes home to Clerkenwell together. That was April Fool Day. I was able to count up to ten; and when April Fool Day come round again, I says to myself, "Now, old chap, you're one and a eight in it." April Fool Day after that, "Now, old chap, you're two and a eight in it." In course of time, I come to ten and a eight in it; two tens and a eight in it. When it got so high, it got the upper hand of me; but this is how I always know there's a eight in it.

G. [*Resuming his breakfast*] Ah! And where's the tinker?

P. Drink put him in the hospital, guv'ner, and the hospital put him—in a glass case, I *have* heerd [*mysteriously*].

G. By that means you got promotion? Took the business, Phil?

P. Yes, commander, I took the business. Such as it was. It wasn't much of a beat—round Saffron Hill, Hatton Garden, Clerkenwell, Smiffeld, and there—poor neighbourhood, where they uses up the kettles till they're past mending. Most of the tramping tinkers used to come and lodge at our place; that was the best part of my master's earnings. But they didn't come to me. I warn't like him. He could sing 'em a good song. *I* couldn't! He could play 'em a tune on any sort of pot you please, so as it was iron or block tin. *I* never could do nothing with a pot, but mend it or bile it—never had a note of music in me. Besides, I was too ill-looking, and their wives complained of me.

G. They were mighty particular. You would pass muster in a crowd, Phil! [*With a pleasant smile.*

P. [*Shaking his head*] No, guv'ner. No, I shouldn't. I was passable enough when I went with the tinker, though nothing to boast of then; but what with blowing the fire with my mouth when I was young, and spileing my complexion, and singeing my hair off, and swallering the smoke; and what with being nat-rally unfort-nate in the way of running against hot metal, and marking myself by sich means; and what with having turn-ups with the tinker as I got older, almost whenever he was too far gone in drink—which was almost always—my beauty was queer, wery queer, even at that time. As to since—what with a dozen years in a dark forge, where the men was given to larking; and what with being scorched in a accident at a gas-works; and what with being blowed out of winder, case-filling at the firework business—I am ugly enough to be made a show on! It was after the case-filling blow-up, when I first see you, commander. You remember?

G. I remember, Phil. You were walking along in the sun.

P. Crawling, guv'ner, again a wall——

G. True, Phil—shouldering your way on——

P. [*Excitedly*] In a nightcap!

G. In a nightcap——

P. [*Still more excitedly*] And hobbling with a couple of sticks!

G. With a couple of sticks. When——

P. [*Putting down his cup and saucer, and hastily removing his plate from his knees*] When you stops, you know, and says to me, "What, comrade! You have been in the wars!" I didn't say much to you, commander, then, for I was took by surprise, that a person so strong and healthy and bold as you was, should stop to speak to such a limping bag of bones as I was. But you says to me, says you, delivering it out of your chest as hearty as possible, so that it was like a glass of something hot, "What accident have you met with? You have been badly hurt. What's amiss, old boy? Cheer up, and tell us about it!" Cheer up! I was cheered already! I says as much to you, you says more to me, I says more to you, you says more to me, and here I am, commander! Here I am, commander! [*Starts from his chair, and unaccount-*

ably begins to slide away.] If a mark's wanted, or if it will improve the business, let the customers take aim at me. They can't spoil *my* beauty. *I'm* all right. Come on! If they want a man to box at, let 'em box at me. Let 'em knock me well about the head. *I* don't mind! If they want a light-weight, to be throwed for practice, Cornwall, Devonshire, or Lancashire, let 'em throw me. They won't hurt *me*. I have been throwed, all sorts of styles, all my life!

[*This speech having been energetically delivered, and accompanied by action illustrative of the various exercises referred to,* PHIL SQUOD *shoulders his way round three sides of the stage, and abruptly tacking off at* MR. GEORGE, *makes a butt at him with his head, intended to express devotion to his service. He then begins to clear away the breakfast.* MR. GEORGE, *after laughing cheerfully, and clapping him on the shoulder, takes a turn at the dumb-bells, and afterwards engages with great gravity in solitary broadsword practice. At this point strange sounds are heard from the outside, a knock follows at the door, and the door opens. Two bearers carry in on a chair the limp and ugly figure of* GRANDFATHER SMALLWEED, *attended by his grand-daughter* JUDY.]

Mr. S. [*Gasping*] O Lord! O dear me! I am shaken! How de do, my dear friend, how de do? Mr. George, my dear friend, [*removes his right arm from the neck of one of his bearers, whom he has nearly throttled coming along*] how de do? You're surprised to see me, my dear friend.

G. I should hardly have been more surprised to have seen your friend in the city.

Mr. S. I am very seldom out. [*Pants.*] I haven't been out for many months. It's inconvenient—and it comes expensive. But I longed so much to see you, my dear Mr. George. How de do, sir?

G. I am well enough. I hope you are the same.

Mr. S. You can't be too well, my dear friend. [*Takes him by both hands.*] I have brought my grand-daughter Judy. I couldn't keep her away. She longed so much to see you.

G. Hum! She bears it calmly!

Mr. S. So we got a hackney-cab, and put a chair in it,

Visitors at the Shooting Gallery.

and just round the corner they lifted me out of the cab and into the chair, and carried me here, that I might see my dear friend in his own establishment! This [*pointing to the bearer who has been in danger of strangulation, and who withdraws adjusting his windpipe*] is the driver of the cab. He has nothing extra. It is by agreement included in his fare. This person [*pointing to the other bearer*] we engaged in the street outside for a pint of beer. Which is twopence. Judy, give the person twopence. I was not sure you had a workman of your own here, my dear friend, or we needn't have employed this person. [*Looks at* PHIL, *with a glance of considerable terror.*] O Lord! O dear me! [PHIL *has stopped short with a gun in his hand, with much of the air of a dead shot, intent on picking* MR. SMALLWEED *off.*] Judy, my child, give the person his twopence. It's a great deal for what he has done. [*The person receives his twopence with anything but transport, tosses the money into the air, catches it over-handed, and retires.*] My dear Mr. George, would you be so kind as help to carry me to the fire? I am accustomed to a fire, and I am an old man, and I soon chill. O dear me! [*The closing exclamation is jerked out of* MR. SMALLWEED *by the suddenness with which* PHIL SQUOD *catches him up, chair and all, and deposits him on the hearthstone.*] O Lord! [*Pants.*] O dear me! O my stars! My dear friend, your workman is very strong—and very prompt. O Lord, he is very prompt! Judy, draw me back a little. I'm being scorched in the legs. [JUDY *backs her grandfather a little way from the fire, shakes him up as usual, and releases his overshadowed eye from its black velvet extinguisher.*] O dear me! O Lord! [*Looks about, and meeting* MR. GEORGE'S *glance, stretches out both his hands.*] My dear friend! So happy in this meeting! And this is your establishment? It's a delightful place. It's a picture! You never find that anything goes off here, accidentally; do you, my dear friend? [*Is very ill at ease.*

G. No, no. No fear of that.

Mr. S. And your workman. He—O dear me!—he never lets anything off without meaning it; does he, my dear friend?

G. [*Smiling*] He has never hurt anybody but himself.

Mr. S. But he might, you know. He seems to have hurt himself a good deal, and he might hurt somebody

else. He mightn't mean it—or he even might. Mr. George, will you order him to leave his infernal firearms alone, and go away? [*Obedient to a nod from* MR. GEORGE, PHIL *retires, empty-handed, to the other side of the stage.* MR. SMALLWEED, *reassured, falls to rubbing his legs.*] And you're doing well, Mr. George? [MR. GEORGE *stands faced about towards him with his broadsword in his hand.*] You are prospering, please the Powers?

G. [*Answering with a cool nod*] Go on. You have not come to say that, I know.

Mr. S. You are so sprightly, Mr. George. You are such good company.

G. Ha ha! Go on!

Mr. S. My dear friend!—But that sword looks awful gleaming and sharp. It might cut somebody, by accident. It makes me shiver, Mr. George. [*Apart to* JUDY, *as* MR. GEORGE *takes a step or two away to lay it aside*] Curse him! He owes me money, and might think of paying off old scores in this murdering place. I wish your brimstone grandmother was here, and he'd shave her head off.

G. [*Returning, folding his arms, and looking down at* MR. SMALLWEED, *who slides every moment lower and lower in his chair*] Now for it!

Mr. S. [*Rubbing his hands with an artful chuckle*] Ho! Yes. Now for it. Now for what, my dear friend?

G. For a pipe.

[*With great composure sets his chair in the chimney corner, takes his pipe from the shelf, fills it and lights it, and falls to smoking peacefully.* MR. SMALLWEED *becomes exasperated, and secretly claws the air with an impotent vindictiveness expressive of an intense desire to tear and rend the visage of* MR. GEORGE. JUDY *pounces at him with something more than the ardour of affection, and so shakes him up, and pats and pokes him in divers parts of his body, that in his grievous distress he utters enforced sounds like a paviour's rammer. Then she stretches out her forefinger, and gives* MR. GEORGE *one poke in the back.* MR. GEORGE *raising his head, she makes another poke at her esteemed grandfather; and, having thus brought them together, stares rigidly at the fire.*]

Mr. S. [*Swallowing his rage*] Aye, aye! Ho, ho! U—u—u—ugh! My dear friend! [*Still clawing.*

G. I tell you what, if you want to converse with me, you must speak out. I am one of the Roughs, and I can't go about and about. I haven't the art to do it. I am not clever enough. It don't suit me. When you go winding round and round me, [*puts his pipe between his lips again*] damme, if I don't feel as if I was being smothered! [*Inflates his broad chest to its utmost extent.*] If you have come to give me a friendly call, I am obliged to you; how are you? If you have come to see whether there's any property on the premises, look about you; you are welcome. If you want to out with something, out with it! [JUDY, *without removing her gaze from the fire, gives her grandfather one poke.*] You see! It's her opinion, too. And why the devil that young woman won't sit down like a Christian [*his eyes musingly fixed on* JUDY] *I* can't comprehend.

Mr. S. She keeps at my side to attend to me, sir. I am an old man, my dear Mr. George, and I need some attention. I can carry my years; I am not a Brimstone poll-parrot; [*snarls and looks unconsciously for a cushion to use as a missile*] but I need attention, my dear friend.

G. [*Wheeling his chair to face* MR. SMALLWEED] Well! Now then?

Mr. S. My friend in the city, Mr. George, has done a little business with a pupil of yours.

G. Has he? I am sorry to hear it.

Mr. S. Yes, sir. [*Rubs his legs.*] He is a fine young soldier now, Mr. George, by the name of Carstone. Friends came forward, and paid it all up, honourable.

G. Did they? Do you think your friend in the city would like a piece of advice?

Mr. S. I think he would, my dear friend. From you.

G. I advise him, then, to do no more business in that quarter. There's no more to be got by it. The young gentleman, to my knowledge, is brought to a dead halt.

Mr. S. [*Cunningly rubbing his legs*] No, no, my dear friend. No, no, Mr. George. No, no, no, sir. Not quite a dead halt, I think. He has good friends, and he is good for his pay, and he is good for the selling price of his commission, and he is good for his chance in a lawsuit, and he is good for his chance in a wife, and—oh, do you know, Mr. George, I think my friend would consider the

young gentleman good for something yet. [*Turns up his velvet cap, and scratches his ear like a monkey.* MR. GEORGE, *who has put aside his pipe and sits with an arm on his chair-back, beats a tattoo on the ground with his right foot.*] But to pass from one subject to another—to promote the conversation, as a joker might say. To pass, Mr. George, from the ensign to the captain.

G. [*Pausing, with a frown*] What are you up to, now? What captain?

Mr. S. Our captain. The captain we know of. Captain Hawdon.

G. [*With a low whistle, as he sees both* MR. SMALLWEED *and* JUDY *looking hard at him*] O! that's it, is it? you are there? Well, what about it? Come, I won't be smothered any more. Speak!

Mr. S. My dear friend, I was applied—Judy, shake me up a little!—I was applied to, yesterday, about the captain; and my opinion still is, that the captain is not dead.

G. Bosh!

Mr. S. [*With his hand to his ear*] What was your remark, my dear friend?

G. Bosh!

Mr. S. Ho! Mr. George, of my opinion you can judge for yourself, according to the questions asked of me, and the reasons given for asking 'em. Now, what do you think the lawyer making the inquiries wants?

G. A job.

Mr. S. Nothing of the kind!

G. [*Folding his arms with an air of confirmed resolution*] Can't be a lawyer, then.

Mr. S. My dear friend, he is a lawyer, and a famous one. He wants to see some fragment in Captain Hawdon's writing. He don't want to keep it. He only wants to see it, and compare it with a writing in his possession.

G. Well?

Mr. S. Well, Mr. George. Happening to remember the advertisement concerning Captain Hawdon, and any information that could be given respecting him, he looked it up and came to me—just as you did, my dear friend. *Will* you shake hands? So glad you came, that day! I should have missed forming such a friendship, if you hadn't come!

G. [*After going through the ceremony with some stiffness*] Well, Mr. Smallweed?

Mr. S. I had no such thing. I have nothing but his signature. Plague pestilence and famine, battle murder and sudden death upon him, [*squeezes up his velvet cap between his angry hands*] I have half a million of his signatures, I think! But you—[*breathlessly recovers his mildness of speech, as* JUDY *readjusts the cap on his head*] you, my dear Mr. George, are likely to have some letter or paper that would suit the purpose. Anything would suit the purpose, written in the hand.

G. [*Pondering*] Some writing in that hand, may be, I have.

Mr. S. My dearest friend!

G. May be, I have not.

Mr. S. [*Crestfallen*] Ho!

G. But if I had bushels of it, I would not show as much as would make a cartridge, without knowing why.

Mr. S. Sir, I have told you why. My dear Mr. George, I have told you why.

G. [*Shaking his head*] Not enough. I must know more, and approve it.

Mr. S. Then, will you come to the lawyer? My dear friend, will you come and see the gentleman? [*Pulls out an old silver watch.*] I told him it was probable I might call upon him, between ten and eleven this forenoon; and it's now half after ten. Will you come and see the gentleman, Mr. George?

G. [*Gravely*] Hum! I don't mind that. Though why this should concern you so much, I don't know.

Mr. S. Everything concerns me, that has a chance in it of bringing anything to light about him. Didn't he take us all in? Didn't he owe us immense sums, all round? Concern me? Who can anything about him concern, more than me? Not, my dear friend, [*lowers his tone*] that I want *you* to betray anything. Far from it. Are you ready to come, my dear friend?

G. Aye! I'll come in a moment. I promise nothing, you know.

Mr. S. No, my dear Mr. George; no.

G. [*Getting his hat, and thick wash-leather gloves*] And you mean to say you're going to give me a lift to this place, wherever it is, without charging for it? [*This pleasantry so tickles* MR. SMALLWEED, *that he laughs, long and low, before the fire. But ever, while he laughs, he glances over his paralytic shoulder at* MR. GEORGE, *and*

eagerly watches him as he unfastens the lock of the cupboard, takes something out with a rustling of paper, folds it, and puts it in his breast. Then JUDY *pokes* MR. SMALLWEED *once, and* MR. SMALLWEED *pokes* JUDY *once.*] I am ready. [*Comes back.*] Phil, you can carry this old gentleman to his coach, and make nothing of him.

Mr. S. O dear me! O Lord! Stop a moment! He's so very prompt! Are you sure you can do it carefully, my worthy man?

[PHIL *makes no reply; but, seizing the chair and its load, sidles away, tightly hugged by the now speechless* MR. SMALLWEED.] [*Curtain falls.*

SILAS WEGG'S STALL

(FROM *Our Mutual Friend*)

CHARACTERS.

SILAS WEGG . . .	*A stall-keeper and ballad-monger.*
MR. BOFFIN . . .	*A retired dustman.*

SCENE.—*In front of a corner house not far from Cavendish Square.*

[*Time.—22 minutes.*]

Description of Characters.

SILAS WEGG: A wooden-legged man, knotty and close-grained, with a hard, expressionless face. He wears spectacles, a closely-buttoned top-coat, and a large, battered hat; and is grasping, covetous, and cunning. For illustrations see pages 186 and 189.

MR. BOFFIN: A broad, round-shouldered, one-sided old fellow, dressed in a pea overcoat and carrying a large stick, which he has a habit of nursing in his arms like a baby. He wears thick shoes, thick leather gaiters, thick gloves, and a broad-brimmed hat; and is a jovial, generous-minded man, the exact opposite of Wegg. For illustration see *Our Mutual Friend*, page 388: "Bibliomania of the Golden Dustman."

Arrangement of Stage.

When the curtain rises, Silas Wegg is seen stumping in carrying the following articles strapped together:—a stool, a clothes-horse, a pair of trestles, a board, and a basket. He crosses the stage, and, separating these, the board and trestles become a counter; the basket supplies a few small lots of oranges, nuts, and

sweets, which are arranged on the counter; the unfolded clothes-horse is made to display a collection of halfpenny ballads, and to act as a screen; and Silas Wegg sits down—with difficulty—on the stool, and puts his remaining foot into the basket. All this is accompanied with a series of grunts from Wegg. On glancing round he discovers that he has forgotten to hang his business announcement on the front of the counter. He therefore gets up clumsily, and hangs up the card, which—badly written—contains the following words—

Errands gone
On with fi
Delity By
Ladies and Gentlemen
I remain
Your humble Servt.
Silas Wegg.

This done, he sits down again, takes off, rubs, and puts on his spectacles as Mr. Boffin enters.

S. W. [*Catching sight of* Mr. B.] Here you are again. And what are you now? Are you in the Funns, or where are you? Are you in independent circumstances, or is it wasting the motions of a bow on you? Come! I'll speculate! I'll invest a bow in you.

[*Rises and bows elaborately.*

Mr. B. Morning, sir! Morning! Morning!

S. W. [*Aside*] Calls me sir! *He* won't answer. A bow gone!

Mr. B. Morning, morning, morning!

[*Strolls about in front of stage.*

S. W. [*Aside*] Appears to be rather a 'arty old cock, too. Good morning to *you*, sir. [*Bows again.*

Mr. B. Do you remember me, then?

[*Stops, one-sided, before the stall, and speaks in a pouncing way, though with great good-humour.*]

S. W. I have noticed you go past our house, sir, several times in the course of the last week or so.

Mr. B. Our house! Meaning——?

[*Points to the back of the stage.*

S. W. [*Nodding*] Yes.

Mr. B. Oh! Now, what—[*inquisitively*] what do they allow you now?

S. W. [*With reticence*] It's job work that I do for our house, and it's not yet brought to an exact allowance.

Mr. B. Oh! It's not yet brought to an exact allowance? No! It's not yet brought to an exact allowance. Oh!—Morning, morning, morning!

[*Strolls away, but comes back again shortly.*

S. W. [*Aside*] Appears to be rather a cracked old cock.

Mr. B. How did you get your wooden leg?

S. W. [*Tartly*] In an accident.

Mr. B. Do you like it?

S. W. Well! I haven't got to keep it warm.

Mr. B. He hasn't, [*repeats this to his knotted stick, as he gives it a hug*] he hasn't got—ha!—ha!—to keep it warm! Did you ever hear of the name of Boffin?

S. W. No. I never did hear of the name of Boffin.

Mr. B. Do you like it?

S. W. Why, no, I can't say I do.

Mr. B. Why don't you like it?

S. W. [*Angrily*] I don't know why I don't, but I don't at all.

Mr. B. Now, I'll tell you something that'll make you sorry for that. [*Smiles.*] My name's Boffin.

S. W. I can't help it! [*Aside*] And if I could, I wouldn't.

Mr. B. [*Smiling still*] But there's another chance for you. Do you like the name of Nicodemus? Think it over. Nick, or Noddy.

S. W. It is not, sir, [*sits down on his stool, with an air of gentle resignation*]—it is not a name as I could wish any one that I had a respect for, to call *me* by; but there may be persons that would not view it with the same objections.—I don't know why.

Mr. B. Noddy Boffin. Noddy. That's my name. Noddy—or Nick—Boffin. What's your name?

S. W. Silas Wegg.—I don't know why Silas, and I don't know why Wegg.

Mr. B. [*Hugging his stick closer*] Now, Wegg, I want to make a sort of offer to you. Do you remember when you first see me?

S. W. [*Looking at him with a meditative eye, and also*

with a softened air as descrying possibility of profit] Let me think. I ain't quite sure, and yet I generally take a powerful sight of notice, too. Was it on a Monday morning, when the butcher-boy had been to our house for orders, and bought a ballad of me, which, being unacquainted with the tune, I run it over to him?

Mr. B. Right, Wegg, right! But he bought more than one.

S. W. Yes, to be sure, sir, he bought several; and wishing to lay out his money to the best, he took my opinion to guide his choice, and we went over the collection together. To be sure we did. Here was him as it might be, and here was myself as it might be, and there was you, Mr. Boffin, as you identically are, with your self-same stick under your wery same arm, and your wery same back towards us. To—be—sure! [*looks a little round* MR. BOFFIN, *to take him in the rear.*] Your wery self-same back!

Mr. B. What do you think I was doing, Wegg?

S. W. I should judge, sir, that you might be glancing your eye down the street.

Mr. B. No, Wegg. I was a listening.

S. W. [*Dubiously*] Was you, indeed?

Mr. B. Not in a dishonourable way, Wegg, because you was singing to the butcher; and you wouldn't sing secrets to a butcher in the street, you know.

S. W. [*Cautiously*] It never happened that I did so yet, to the best of my remembrance. But I might do it. A man can't say what he might wish to do some day or another.

Mr. B. Well, I was a listening to you and to him. And what do you—you haven't got another stool, have you? I'm rather thick in my breath. [*Coughs huskily.*

S. W. I haven't got another, but you're welcome to this. [*Resigns it.*] It's a treat to me to stand.

Mr. B. [*In a tone of great enjoyment, as he settles himself down, still nursing his stick like a baby*] Lard! it's a pleasant place, this! And then to be shut in on each side, with these ballads, like so many book-leaf blinkers! Why, it's delightful!

S. W. [*As a delicate hint*] If I am not mistaken, sir, you alluded to some offer or another that was in your mind?

Mr. B. I'm coming to it! All right. I'm coming to

it! I was going to say that when I listened that morning, I listened with hadmiration amounting to haw. I thought to myself, "Here's a man with a wooden leg—a literary man with——"

S. W. [*Deprecatingly*] N—not exactly so, sir.

Mr. B. Why, you know every one of these songs by name and by tune, and if you want to read or to sing any one on 'em off straight, you've only to whip on your spectacles and do it! I see you at it!

S. W. [*With a conscious inclination of the head*] Well, sir, we'll say literary, then.

[*Turns his basket upside down and sits down upon it opposite* MR. B.]

Mr. B. "A literary man—*with* a wooden leg—and all Print is open to him!" That's what I thought to myself, that morning. [*Leans forward to describe, uncramped by the clothes-horse, as large an arc as his right arm can make.*] "All Print is open to him!" And it is, ain't it?

S. W. [*With modesty*] Why, truly, sir, I believe you couldn't show me the piece of English print, that I wouldn't be equal to collaring and throwing.

Mr. B. On the spot?

S. W. On the spot.

Mr. B. I know'd it! Then consider this. Here am I, a man without a wooden leg, and yet all print is shut to me.

S. W. Indeed, sir? Education neglected?

Mr. B. [*With emphasis*] Neg—lected! That ain't no word for it. I don't mean to say but what if you showed me a B, I could so far give you change for it, as to answer Boffin.

S. W. Come, come, sir, that's something, too.

Mr. B. It's something, but I'll take my oath it ain't much.

S. W. Perhaps it's not as much as could be wished by an inquiring mind, sir.

Mr. B. Now, look here. I'm retired from business. Me and Mrs. Boffin—Henerietty Boffin—which her father's name was Henery, and her mother's name was Hetty, and so you get it—we live on a compittance, under the will of a diseased governor.

S. W. Gentleman dead, sir?

Mr. B. Man alive, don't I tell you? A diseased governor! Now, it's too late for me to begin shovelling and

sifting at alphabeds and grammar-books. I'm getting to be a old bird, and I want to take it easy. But I want some reading—some find bold reading, some splendid book in a gorging Lord-Mayor's-Show of wollumes as'll reach right down your pint of view, and take time to go by you. How can I get that reading, Wegg? [*Taps him on the breast with the head of his thick stick.*] By paying a man truly qualified to do it, so much an hour—say twopence—to come and do it.

S. W. Hem! Flattered, sir, I am sure. Hem! This is the offer you mentioned, sir?

Mr. B. Yes. Do you like it?

S. W. I am considering of it, Mr. Boffin.

Mr. B. I don't want to tie a literary man—*with* a wooden leg—down too tight. A halfpenny an hour shan't part us. The hours are your own to choose, after you've done for the day with your house here. I live over Maiden Lane way—out Holloway direction—and you've only got to go East-and-by-North when you've finished here, and you're there. Twopence halfpenny an hour—[*takes a piece of chalk from his pocket and gets off the stool to work the sum on the top of it in his own way*] two long'uns and a short'un—twopence halfpenny; two short'uns is a long'un, and two two long'uns is four long'uns—making five long'uns; six nights a week at five long'uns a night, [*scores them all down separately*] and you mount up to thirty long'uns. A round'un! Half-a-crown!

[*Points to this result, then smears it out with his moistened glove, and sits down on the remains.*]

S. W. [*Meditating*] Half-a-crown. Yes. It ain't much, sir. Half-a-crown.

Mr. B. Per week, you know.

S. W. Per week. Yes. As to the amount of strain upon the intellect now. Was you thinking at all of poetry?

Mr. B. Would it come dearer?

S. W. It would come dearer. For when a person comes to grind off poetry night after night, it is but right he should expect to be paid for its weakening effect on his mind.

Mr. B. To tell you the truth, Wegg, I wasn't thinking of poetry, except in so fur as this. If you was to happen

now and then to feel yourself in the mind to tip me and Mrs. Boffin one of your ballads, why then we should drop into poetry.

S. W. I follow you, sir. But not being a regular musical professional, I should be loath to engage myself for that; and therefore, when I dropped into poetry, I should ask to be considered in the light of a friend.

[MR. BOFFIN'S *eyes sparkle, and he shakes* WEGG *earnestly by the hand.*]

Mr. B. [*With unconcealed anxiety*] What do you think of the terms, Wegg?

S. W. [*With an air of great generosity*] Mr. Boffin, I never bargain.

Mr. B. [*Admiringly*] So I should have thought of you!

S. W. No, sir. I never did 'aggle and I never will 'aggle. Consequently I meet you at once, free and fair, with—Done, for double the money!

Mr. B. [*Unprepared for this conclusion*] You know better what it ought to be than I do, Wegg. [*Again shakes hands with him.*] Could you begin to-night, Wegg?

S. W. Yes, sir. I see no difficulty if you wish it. You are provided with the needful implement—a book, sir?

Mr. B. Bought him at a sale. Eight wollumes. Red and gold. Purple ribbon in every wollume, to keep the place where you leave off. Do you know him?

S. W. The book's name, sir?

Mr. B. [*Slightly disappointed*] I thought you might have know'd him without it. His name is Decline-and-Fall-Off-The-Rooshan-Empire.

[*Pronounces these words slowly and with much caution.*

S. W. Aye indeed!

[*Nods his head with an air of friendly recognition.*

Mr. B. You know him, Wegg?

S. W. I haven't been not to say right slap through him, very lately, having been otherways employed, Mr. Boffin. But know him? Old familiar declining and falling off the Rooshan? Rather, sir! Ever since I was not so high as your stick. Ever since my eldest brother left our cottage to enlist into the army. On which occasion, as the ballad that was made about it describes—

"Beside that cottage door, Mr. Boffin,
A girl was on her knees;
She held aloft a snowy scarf, sir,
Which (my eldest brother noticed) fluttered in the breeze.
She breathed a prayer for him, Mr. Boffin;
A prayer he could not hear.
And my eldest brother lean'd upon his sword, Mr. Boffin,
And wiped away a tear."

[WEGG *rises to declaim this poetry, and does it with much waving of his stick and arms.*]

Mr. B. Where I live is called The Bower. "Boffin's Bower" is the name Mrs. Boffin christened it when we come into it as a property. If you should meet with anybody that don't know it by that name—which hardly anybody does—when you've got nigh upon about a odd mile, or say and a quarter if you like, up Maiden Lane, Battle Bridge, ask for "Harmony Jail," and you'll be put right. [*Claps him on the shoulder with the greatest enthusiasm.*] I shall expect you, Wegg, most jyfully. I shall have no peace or patience till you come. Print is now opening ahead of me. This night, a literary man—*with* a wooden leg—[*bestows an admiring look upon that decoration, as if it greatly enhances the relish of* MR. WEGG'S *attainments*] will begin to lead me a new life! My fist again, Wegg. Morning, morning, morning! [*Curtain falls.*

MR. VENUS'S SHOP

(FROM *Our Mutual Friend*)

CHARACTERS.

MR. VENUS .	. *A "Preserver of Animals and Birds."*
SILAS WEGG .	. *A stall-keeper and ballad-monger.*
BOY.	

SCENE.—*A shop in a narrow and dirty street in Clerkenwell.*

[*Time.*—18 *minutes.*]

Description of Characters.

MR. VENUS: A shrivelled-up man with a sallow face, weak eyes, and a tangle of reddish-dusty hair. His expression and stoop are like those of a shoemaker. He wears no coat or cravat, but only a loose waistcoat over his yellow linen; and his tumbled shirt-collar is open. He has a whining, querulous voice. For illustrations see pages 186 and 189.

SILAS WEGG: see *ante,* page 175.

BOY: see illustration, page 186.

Arrangement of Stage.

A small fireplace on one side of the stage, with a chair and a box near it. Near the centre is a small counter, on which are all sorts of objects in disorder, prominent amongst them being a skull or two, some stuffed birds or animals, and some jars of "bottled preparations." The stage is lit only by one tallow candle in a tin candlestick which stands on the counter, and by the firelight. As the curtain rises, Mr. Venus is seen toasting a muffin at the fire, on which a kettle is boiling. Near at hand are a teapot, cup and saucer, etc. A knock is heard at the door, and Silas Wegg enters.

[The skeleton ribs and leg-bones required for this scene are easily prepared by painting them in white on blackened pieces of cardboard; the remaining properties—skulls, etc.—can probably be borrowed without difficulty from the local museum.]

S. W. Good evening, Mr. Venus. Don't you remember?

[MR. VENUS *rises, holds his candle over the little counter, and then holds it down towards the legs, natural and artificial, of* MR. WEGG.]

Mr. V. To be *sure!* How do you do?

S. W. Wegg, you know.

Mr. V. Yes, yes. Hospital amputation?

S. W. Just so.

Mr. V. Yes, yes. How do you do? Sit down by the fire, and warm your—your other one. [MR. WEGG *sits down on a box in front of the fire, and sniffs several times.*] My tea is drawing, and my muffin is on the hob, Mr. Wegg; will you partake?

[*Produces another cup and saucer from behind, and pours out two cups of tea. Both drink from their saucers.*]

S. W. And how have I been going on, this long time, Mr. Venus? [*Slaps his wooden leg.*

Mr. V. Very bad.

S. W. [*With an air of surprise*] What? Am I still at home?

Mr. V. Always at home.

S. W. Strange. To what do you attribute it?

Mr. V. [*In a weak voice of querulous complaint*] I don't know to what to attribute it, Mr. Wegg. I can't work you into a miscellaneous one, nohow. Do what I will, you can't be got to fit. Anybody with a passable knowledge would pick you out at a look, and say—"No go! Don't match!"

S. W. [*With some little irritation*] Well, but hang it, Mr. Venus, that can't be personal and peculiar in *me.* It must often happen with miscellaneous ones.

Mr. V. With ribs—I grant you—always. But not else. When I prepare a miscellaneous one, I know beforehand that I can't keep to nature, and be miscellaneous with ribs, because every man has his own ribs, and no other man's

will go with them; but elsewhere I can be miscellaneous. I have just sent home a Beauty—a perfect Beauty—to a school of art. One leg Belgian, one leg English, and the pickings of eight other people in it. Talk of not being qualified to be miscellaneous! By rights you *ought* to be, Mr. Wegg.

S. W. [*Looking as hard at his one leg as he can in the dim light*] It must be the fault of the other people. [*Impatiently*] Or how do you mean to say it comes about?

Mr. V. I don't know how it comes about. Stand up a minute. Hold the light. [MR. VENUS *takes, from a corner by his chair, the bones of a leg and foot, beautifully put together. These he compares with* MR. WEGG'S *leg; that gentleman looking on, as if he were being measured for a riding-boot.*] No, I don't know how it is, but so it is. You have got a twist in that bone, to the best of my belief. *I* never saw the likes of you.

S. W. [*Having looked distrustfully at his own limb, and suspiciously at the pattern with which it has been compared*] I'll bet a pound that ain't an English one!

Mr. V. An easy wager, when we run so much into foreign! No, it belongs to that French gentleman.

[*As he nods towards a point of darkness behind* MR. WEGG, *the latter, with a slight start, looks round for* "that French gentleman," *whom he at length descries to be represented* (*in a very workmanlike manner*) *by his ribs only, standing on a shelf in another corner.*]

S. W. Oh! I dare say you were all right enough in your own country, but I hope no objections will be taken to my saying that the Frenchman was never yet born as I should wish to match.

[*At this moment the door is violently pushed inward, and a* BOY *follows it, who lets it slam.*]

Boy. Come for the stuffed canary.

Mr. V. It's three and ninepence. Have you got the money? [*The* BOY *produces four shillings.* MR. VENUS, *in exceedingly low spirits, and making whimpering sounds, peers about for the stuffed canary, taking the candle to assist his search. Having found it, he holds it up and shows it to the* BOY.] There! There's animation! On a twig, making up his mind to hop! Take care of him; he's a lovely specimen. [*Counts out the change.*] And

Mr. Venus Surrounded with the Trophies of his Art.

three is four. [*The* Boy *gathers up his change and pulls the door open.*] Stop him! Come back, you young villain! You've got a tooth among them halfpence.

Boy. How was I to know I'd got it? You giv it me. I don't want none of your teeth, I've got enough of my own.

[*Selects it from his change, and throws it on the counter.*]

Mr. V. [*Pathetically*] Don't sauce *me,* in the wicious pride of your youth. Don't hit *me* because you see I'm down. I'm low enough without that. It dropped into the till, I suppose. They drop into everything. There was two in the coffee-pot at breakfast-time. Molars.

Boy. Very well, then. What do you call names for?

[*Goes off, making a face at* Mr. Venus.

Mr. V. [*Shaking his stock of dusty hair, and winking his weak eyes*] Don't sauce *me,* in the wicious pride of your youth; don't hit *me* because you see I'm down. You've no idea how small you'd come out, if I had the articulating of you. Oh dear me, dear me! [*sighs heavily while snuffing the candle.*] The world that appeared so flowery has ceased to blow! You're casting your eye round the shop, Mr. Wegg. Let me show you a light. My working bench. My young man's bench. A Wice. Tools. Bones, warious. Skulls, warious. Preserved Indian baby. African ditto. Bottled preparations, warious. Everything within reach of your hand, in good preservation. The mouldy ones a-top. What's in those hampers over them again, I don't quite remember. Say, human warious. Cats. Articulated English baby. Dogs. Ducks. Glass eyes, warious. Mummied bird. Dried cuticle, warious. Oh dear me! That's the general panoramic view. [*Holds and waves the candle as these heterogeneous objects are named.*] Oh dear me, dear me!

[*Resumes his seat, and falls to pouring himself out more tea.*]

S. W. Where am *I?*

Mr. V. You're somewhere in the back shop across the yard, sir; and speaking quite candidly, I wish I'd never bought you of the Hospital Porter.

S. W. Now, look here, what did you give for me?

Mr. V. Well, [*blows his tea*] you were one of a warious lot, and I don't know.

S. W. What will you take for me?

Mr. V. [*Still blowing his tea*] Well, I'm not prepared, at a moment's notice, to tell you, Mr. Wegg.

S. W. [*Persuasively*] Come! According to your own account, I'm not worth much.

Mr. V. Not for miscellaneous working in, I grant you, Mr. Wegg; but you might turn out valuable yet, as a—— [*here* MR. VENUS *takes a gulp of tea, so hot that it makes him choke, and sets his weak eyes watering*] as a Monstrosity, if you'll excuse me.

S. W. I think you know me, Mr. Venus, and I think you know I never bargain. [MR. VENUS *takes gulps of hot tea, shutting his eyes at every gulp, and opening them again in a spasmodic manner.*] I have a prospect of getting on in life and elevating myself by my own independent exertions, [*feelingly*] and I shouldn't like—I tell you openly I should *not* like—under such circumstances, to be what I may call dispersed, a part of me here and a part of me there, but should wish to collect myself like a genteel person.

Mr. V. It's a prospect at present, is it, Mr. Wegg? Then you haven't got the money for a deal about you? Then I'll tell you what I'll do with you; I'll hold you over. I am a man of my word, and you needn't be afraid of my disposing of you. I'll hold you over. That's a promise. Oh dear me, dear me!

[*Sighs and pours himself out more tea.*

S. W. You seem very low, Mr. Venus. Is business bad? [*Sympathetically.*

Mr. V. Never was so good.

S. W. Is your hand out at all?

Mr. V. Never was so well in. Mr. Wegg, I'm not only first in the trade, but I'm *the* trade. You may go and buy a skeleton at the West End if you like, and pay the West End price, but it'll be my putting together. I've as much to do as I can possibly do, with the assistance of my young man, and I take a pride and pleasure in it.

[*Right hand extended, and steaming saucer in his left hand.*]

S. W. That ain't a state of things to make you low, Mr. Venus!

Mr. V. Mr. Wegg, I know it ain't. Mr. Wegg, not to name myself as a workman without an equal, I've gone on improving myself in my knowledge of Anatomy, till both by sight and by name I'm perfect. Mr. Wegg, if you was

Mr. Wegg Prepares a Grindstone for Mr. Boffin's Nose.

brought here loose in a bag to be articulated, I'd name your smallest bones blindfold equally with your largest, as fast as I could pick 'em out, and I'd sort 'em all, and sort your wertebræ, in a manner that would equally surprise and charm you.

S. W. [*Not quite so readily as last time*] Well, *that* ain't a state of things to be low about.—Not for *you* to be low about, leastways.

Mr. V. Mr. Wegg, I know it ain't. Mr. Wegg, I know it ain't. But it's the heart that lowers me, it is the heart! Be so good as to take and read that card out loud.

[*Passes over to* WEGG *a card picked from a drawer.*

S. W. [*Putting on his spectacles and reading*] "Mr. Venus——"

Mr. V. Yes. Go on.

S. W. "Preserver of Animals and Birds——"

Mr. V. Yes. Go on.

S. W. "Articulator of Human Bones."

Mr. V. That's it. [*Groans.*] That's it! Mr. Wegg, I'm thirty-two, and a bachelor. Mr. Wegg, I love her. Mr. Wegg, she is worthy of being loved by a Potentate! [*Confronts him with his hand on his coat-collar; but sits down again, with the calmness of despair.*] She objects to the business.

S. W. Does she know the profits of it?

Mr. V. She knows the profits of it, but she don't appreciate the art of it, and she objects to it. [*Takes out of his pocket a letter and slowly reads it.*] "I do not wish," she writes in her own handwriting, "to regard myself, nor yet to be regarded, in that bony light." And so a man climbs to the top of the tree, Mr. Wegg, only to see that there's no look-out when he's up there! I sit here of a night surrounded by the lovely trophies of my art, and what have they done for me? Ruined me. Brought me to the pass of being informed that "she does not wish to regard herself, nor yet to be regarded, in that bony light!" [*Drinks more tea by gulps.*] It lowers me. When I'm equally lowered all over, lethargy sets in. By sticking to it till one or two in the morning, I get oblivion. Don't let me detain you, Mr. Wegg. I'm not company for any one.

S. W. [*Rising*] It is not on that account, but because I've got an appointment. It's time I was at Harmon's.

[*Curtain falls as* SILAS WEGG *goes out and* MR. VENUS *pours out more tea.*]

AT "JENNY WREN'S"

(FROM *Our Mutual Friend*)

CHARACTERS.

"JENNY WREN"	*A dolls' dress-maker.*
"HER BAD CHILD"	*Jenny Wren's father.*
LIZZIE HEXAM	*Jenny Wren's friend, who is living with her.*
CHARLIE HEXAM	*Lizzie Hexam's brother —a pupil-teacher.*
BRADLEY HEADSTONE	*Charlie Hexam's schoolmaster, in love with Lizzie Hexam.*

SCENE.—*The parlour of a house in Church Street, Smith Square, by Millbank.*

[*Time.*—15 *minutes.*]

Description of Characters.

"JENNY WREN": A deformed child of twelve, who has a queer but not ugly little face, with bright and sharp grey eyes, and long fair hair hanging luxuriantly over her shoulders. For illustration see page 196, and see also *Our Mutual Friend*, page 609: "Miss Wren Fixes her Idea."

"HER BAD CHILD": A weak, wretched, trembling creature, who is never sober. He has prematurely grey, scanty hair, blotchy red cheeks, and swollen, lead-coloured lips. For illustration see page 196.

LIZZIE HEXAM: A kind-hearted girl of about twenty years of age; good-looking and dark in complexion, with brown cheeks; very different from her brother both in looks and in character. For illustrations see *Our Mutual Friend*, page 577: "The Parting by the River," and page 231: "The Garden on the Roof."

CHARLIE HEXAM: A boy of about sixteen, with a coarse voice and face, and a stunted figure. For illustration see *Our Mutual Friend*, page 238: "Forming the Domestic Virtues."

BRADLEY HEADSTONE: A highly certificated school-master, dressed in a decent black coat and waistcoat, formal black tie, pantaloons of pepper and salt, and with a silver watch in his pocket and a hair-guard round his neck. He looks a thoroughly decent young man of six-and-twenty, but has a certain manner of stiffness and awkwardness. See illustration as for Charlie Hexam.

Arrangement of Stage.

A low working-table on the side opposite the street door, one little, low, old-fashioned arm-chair at this table, and two other chairs at the other side of the room. At back of stage an inner door. As the curtain rises, Jenny Wren is seen seated at her table surrounded with dolls and materials for their dresses, some straw and a glue-pot. Her crutch is close at hand and in full view. A knock is heard at the door, and Bradley Headstone and Charlie Hexam enter, leaving the door open.

Jen. I can't get up, because my back's bad and my legs are queer. But I'm the person of the house.

C. H. [*Staring at her*] Who else is at home?

Jen. Nobody's at home at present, except the person of the house. What did you want, young man?

C. H. I wanted to see my sister.

Jen. Many young men have sisters. Give me your name, young man.

C. H. Hexam is my name.

Jen. Ah, indeed? I thought it might be. Your sister will be in in about a quarter of an hour. I am very fond of your sister. She's my particular friend. Take a seat. And this gentleman's name?

[*Points to* BRADLEY HEADSTONE.

C. H. Mr. Headstone, my school-master.

Jen. Take a seat. And would you please to shut the street-door first? I can't very well do it myself, because my back's so bad, and my legs are so queer. [BRADLEY

HEADSTONE *does this and then sits down.* JENNY WREN *goes on with her work of gluing together with a camel's-hair brush certain pieces of cardboard and thin wood, previously cut into various shapes. As she brings two thin edges accurately together by giving them a little bite, she glances at the visitors out of the corners of her grey eyes.*] You can't tell me the name of my trade, I'll be bound.

C. H. You make pincushions.

Jen. What else do I make?

B. H. Penwipers.

Jen. Ha! ha! What else do I make? You're a schoolmaster, but you can't tell me.

B. H. [*Pointing to a corner of the little bench*] You do something with straw; but I don't know what.

Jen. Well done you! I only make pincushions and penwipers to use up my waste. But my straw really does belong to my business. Try again. What do I make with my straw?

B. H. Dinner-mats.

Jen. A school-master, and says dinner-mats! I'll give you a clue to my trade, in a game of forfeits. I love my love with a B because she's Beautiful; I hate my love with a B because she is Brazen; I took her to the sign of the Blue Boar, and I treated her with Bonnets; her name's Bouncer, and she lives in Bedlam. [*Counts these off on her fingers.*] Now, what do I make with my straw?

C. H. Ladies' bonnets?

Jen. [*Nodding assent*] Fine ladies. Dolls'. I'm a dolls' dressmaker.

B. H. I hope it's a good business?

Jen. [*Shrugging her shoulders and shaking her head.*] No. Poorly paid. And I'm often so pressed for time! I had a doll married, last week, and was obliged to work all night. And it's not good for me, on account of my back being so bad and my legs so queer.

B. H. I am sorry your fine ladies are so inconsiderate.

Jen. [*Shrugging her shoulders again*] It's the way with them. And they take no care of their clothes, and they never keep to the same fashions a month. I work for a doll with three daughters. Bless you, she's enough to ruin her husband!

[*Gives a weird little laugh and another look out of the corners of her eyes.*]

B. H. Are you always as busy as you are now?

Jen. Busier! I'm slack just now. I finished a large mourning order the day before yesterday. Doll I work for lost a canary-bird.

[*Gives another little laugh, and then nods her head several times.*]

B. H. Are you alone all day? Don't any of the neighbouring children——?

Jen. [*With a little scream*] Ah, lud! Don't talk of children. I can't bear children. [*With an angry little shake of her right fist close before her eyes.*] *I* know their tricks and their manners. Always running about and screeching, always playing and fighting, always skip-skip-skipping on the pavement and chalking it for their games! Oh! *I* know their tricks and their manners! [*Shakes her little fist as before.*] And that's not all. Ever so often calling names in through a person's keyhole, and imitating a person's back and legs. Oh! *I* know their tricks and their manners. And I'll tell you what I'd do to punish 'em. There's doors under the church in the Square—black doors, leading into black vaults. Well! I'd open one of those doors, and I'd cram 'em all in, and then I'd lock the door and through the keyhole I'd blow in pepper.

C. H. What would be the good of blowing in pepper?

Jen. To set 'em sneezing, and make their eyes water. And when they were all sneezing and inflamed, I'd mock 'em through the keyhole. Just as they, with their tricks and their manners, mock a person through a person's keyhole! [*Shakes her little fist emphatically close before her eyes.*] No, no, no! No children for me. Give me grown-ups. I always did like grown-ups, and always kept company with them. So sensible. Sit so quiet. Don't go prancing and capering about! And I mean always to keep among none but grown-ups till I marry. I suppose I must make up my mind to marry, one of these days.

C. H. [*Rising to go*] I think, Mr. Headstone, as my sister is so long in coming we might go and meet her.

B. H. [*Also rising*] Very well, Charlie, we will.

[*They both go out, nodding to* JENNY WREN *as they go.* JENNY *goes on with her work, singing to herself as she works. Presently the door opens and* LIZZIE HEXAM *enters. She at once crosses over to* JENNY, *who breaks off her song.*]

Jen. Well, Lizzie-Mizzie-Wizzie. What's the news out of doors?

Liz. [*Playfully smoothing* JENNY'S *long hair*] What's the news in doors?

Jen. Let me see, said the blind man. Why, the last news is, that I don't mean to marry your brother.

Liz. My brother? Has he been here?

Jen. Yes; he has just left with his school-master. You must have missed one another. [*Abruptly*] Don't like the boy. [LIZZIE *finishes putting the hair carefully back over* JENNY'S *misshapen shoulders, and then lights a candle and stands it on the mantelshelf. Then she seats herself in a chair by the side of the little chair, and protectingly draws under her arm the spare hand that creeps up to her.*] This is what your loving Jenny Wren calls the best time in the day and night. I have been thinking, as I sat at work to-day, what a thing it would be if I should be able to have your company till I am married, or at least courted. Because when I am courted, I shall make Him do some of the things that you do for me. He couldn't brush my hair like you do, or help me up and down stairs like you do, and he couldn't do anything like you do; but he could take my work home, and he could call for orders in his clumsy way. And he shall too. *I'll* trot him about, I can tell him! Wherever he may happen to be just at present, or whoever he may happen to be, *I* know his tricks and his manners, and I give him warning to look out.

Liz. [*Smiling, and smoothing* JENNY'S *hair*] Don't you think you are rather hard upon him?

Jen. [*With an air of vast experience*] Not a bit. My dear, they don't care for you, those fellows, if you're *not* hard upon 'em. But I was saying If I should be able to have your company. Ah! What a large If! Ain't it?

Liz. I have no intention of parting company, Jenny.

[*Rises and takes the candle as the door opens to admit* JENNY WREN'S BAD CHILD, *who comes stumbling in in a drunken fashion.*]

H. B. C. [*In a submissive manner, speaking thickly and with difficulty*] Don't go away, Miss Hexam. Don't fly from unfortunate man in shattered state of health. Give poor invalid honour of your company. It ain't—ain't catching.

Liz. I have something to do in my own room.

[*Goes away upstairs by the inner door.*

The Person of the House and the Bad Child.

H. B. C. [*Timidly*] How's my Jenny? How's my Jenny Wren, best of children, object dearest affections broken-hearted invalid.

Jen. [*Stretching out her arm in an attitude of command*] Go along with you! Go along into your corner! Get into your corner directly! [*He makes as if he would offer some remonstrance; but, not venturing to resist the person of the house, thinks better of it, and goes and sits down on a chair near the street-door.*] Oh-h-h! You bad old boy! [*Points her little finger.*] Oh-h-h! You naughty, wicked creature! *What* do you mean by it? [HER BAD CHILD *puts out two hands a little way, as making overtures of peace and reconciliation. Tears stand in his eyes, and his swollen lead-coloured under-lip trembles.*] *I* know your tricks and your manners. *I* know where you've been to! Oh, you disgraceful old chap! Slave, slave, slave, from morning to night, and all for this! *What* do you mean by it? I wish you had been taken up, and locked up. I wish you had been poked into cells and black holes, and run over by rats and spiders and beetles. *I* know their tricks and their manners, and they'd have tickled you nicely. Ain't you ashamed of yourself?

H. B. C. [*Stammering*] Yes, my dear.

Jen. Then *what* do you mean by it?

H. B. C. Circumstances over which had no control.

Jen. [*Speaking with vehement sharpness*] *I*'ll circumstance you and control you too if you talk in that way. I'll give you in charge to the police, and have you fined five shillings when you can't pay, and then I won't pay the money for you, and you'll be transported for life. How should you like to be transported for life?

H. B. C. Shouldn't like it. Poor shattered invalid. Trouble nobody long.

Jen. [*Tapping the table near her in a business-like manner, and shaking her head and her chin*] Come, come! you know what you've got to do. Put down your money this instant. [HER BAD CHILD *begins to rummage in its pockets.*] Spent a fortune out of your wages, I'll be bound! Put it here! All you've got left! Every farthing! [*He makes a great business of collecting it from his pockets.*] Is this all?

[*A confused heap of pence and shillings lies on the table.*]

H. B. C. Got no more.

[*Ruefully, with an accordant shake of the head.*

Jen. Let me make sure. You know what you've got to do. Turn all your pockets inside out, and leave 'em so! [*He obeys.* JENNY *reduces the heap to order.*] Here's but seven and eightpence halfpenny! Oh, you prodigal old son! Now you shall be starved.

H. B. C. [*Whimpering*] No, don't starve me.

Jen. If you were treated as you ought to be, you'd be fed upon the skewers of cats' meat; only the skewers, after the cats had had the meat. As it is, go to bed.

H. B. C. [*Stumbling out of the corner to comply, and again putting out both his hands*] Circumstances over which no control——

Jen. Get along with you to bed! Don't speak to me. I'm not going to forgive you. Go to bed this moment!

[HER BAD CHILD *then shuffles along by the wall at the back of the stage as* LIZZIE HEXAM *re-enters.*]

Liz. [*Going to* JENNY WREN *and putting an arm round her*] Never mind, Jenny dear. Shall we have our supper?

[*Curtain falls as* HER BAD CHILD *stumbles out of the door leading upstairs.*]

THE END

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